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ABSTRACT

Parent involvement in their children's education and school life was studied in England through a telephone survey of 2,109 households. Around 1 in 3 parents (29%) felt "very involved" in their child's school life, and primary school parents were more likely to feel this way than secondary school parents. Mothers were more likely to say that they were "very involved" than were fathers. Around 72% of all parents agreed that they wanted more involvement, and a third definitely agreed. Among the barriers to involvement, parents cited the competing demands in their lives such as work commitments, demands of other children, childcare difficulties, and lack of time generally. Almost all parents were happy with the school's attitude toward them, with a large majority finding the school welcoming (94%) and willing to involve them (84%). Parents particularly value face-to-face contact with teachers, but a significant minority thought that they would be labeled "trouble makers" if they talked too much. Parents were generally happy with the quality of written communications coming from schools, although a significant minority (27%) thought that the general information was spoiled by jargon. Many parents were not aware of the labels given to recent educational initiatives, and 35% did not recognize the term "Home School Agreement," even though all had been invited to sign one. A Technical Appendix discusses sampling methods, and the survey questionnaire is attached. (Contains 12 figures, 26 tables, and 14 references.) (SLD)

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RESEARCH

Parental Involvement in Education

Bridget Williams, Joel Williams & Anna Ullman
BMRB Social Research

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UD 035 139

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No 332

Parental Involvement in Education

Bridget Williams, Joel Williams & Anna Ullman
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Executive summary

Introduction

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) commissioned BMRB Social Research to conduct a telephone survey of households containing children of primary or secondary school age (5-16) attending maintained schools. The survey was designed to investigate the level of involvement parents have in their children's education and general school life.

Key findings

- Around one in three (29%) parents felt "very involved" in their child's school life. Primary school parents were more likely to feel this way than secondary school parents. Mums were also more likely to say that they are 'very involved' than dads.

- Around three quarters (72%) of all parents agreed that they wanted more involvement, and a third (35%) definitely agreed. When asked about the barriers to becoming more involved parents cited the competing demands in their lives such as work commitments, demands of other children, childcare difficulties and lack of time generally.

- Almost all parents were happy with the school's attitude towards them, with a large majority finding the school welcoming (94%) and willing to involve them (84%). Parents particularly value face-to-face contact with teachers. However, a significant minority (16%) felt that they would be labelled as 'trouble makers' if they talked too much.

- Parents seem largely happy with the quality of written communication coming from schools, although a significant minority (27%) felt the general information – as opposed to child-specific –was spoilt by jargon. Parents who had left school at 16 were most likely to feel this way. However, most parents (85%) were happy with the quality of information provided, saying that the school gives clear information about how their child is getting on.

- Many parents were unaware of the various labels given to recent education initiatives. More than one in three (35%) did not recognise the term 'Home School Agreement', despite the fact that all of them should have been invited to sign one.

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Aims

The aims of the research were to establish:

- the level of involvement parents have in their children's education, focusing on:
    - practical help in schools
    - relationship with teachers
    - involvement with homework
- what parents perceive as barriers to further involvement
- the awareness of Government initiatives and information sources
- how parents find out about their child's progress at school and what improvements they think could be made to communication with schools

Background

The Government's strategy for involving parents in their children's education was first described in the 1997 White Paper 'Excellence in Schools', which recognised that pupils need support from parents to ensure they reach their full potential. This strategy had three strands, around which the majority of the Department's work on parental involvement is based:

- Providing information to parents.
- Giving parents a more effective voice.
- Encouraging families to learn together.

The Department has introduced a number of initiatives to encourage parents to become more closely involved in schools, including the following:

- Schools are required to produce Home-School Agreements, which are developed in consultation with parents. These Agreements set out the roles and responsibilities of both parents and schools in building up a partnership to raise standards in education.
- Schools are required to publish annual reports and prospectuses to allow parents to make informed decisions about their child's education.
- Schools are also required to make at least one report per year to parents on their child's performance.

- Parents are encouraged to have more of a voice in the way schools are run, for instance by taking part in home-school associations, or becoming parent governors. Parent Governor Representatives have also been elected to LEA Education Committees.

- The Department has also increased the amount of information available to parents, and has made this information more easily accessible. Information is available through a special Parents' Centre Website, as well as through a series of publications.

- There have also been a number of publicity campaigns which aim to involve parents more in their children's education. These include campaigns encouraging involvement in reading and maths and others supporting the distribution of Parents + Schools magazine and The Learning Journey (a guide to the curriculum designed for parents).

Given that all these initiatives are designed to increase parental involvement, there is a need to measure their involvement over time. To this end, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) commissioned BMRB to conduct a survey of parents.

Method and sample description

In order to carry out the aims and objectives outlined above, BMRB conducted a telephone survey of parents of children aged 5-16 attending state schools (England only). This survey achieved a representative sample of 2019 households containing children of primary and secondary school age (5-16). The fieldwork was carried out from 21st of November to 19th of December 2001. The survey was carried out using a probability sampling technique devised by SSI, a commercial specialist.

A screening question was used to establish household eligibility and the computer programme made a random selection among those parents (or guardians) eligible for interview. Interviewers called back a minimum of ten times in order to complete an interview once a respondent had been selected. A 'refusals' survey was also conducted, in which senior interviewers followed up 'soft' refusals and tried to convert these into interviews. In total, interviews were achieved in 56% of all identified eligible households.

Where more than one child was aged between 5 and 16 in the household, the interviewer randomly selected one as the subject of the survey where an aggregation of parental behaviour across children of different ages would have been meaningless.

One quarter (24%) of households surveyed contained only one eligible parent, and most of these were headed by women. Because of this natural bias, 60% of the weighted sample of parents was female. The respondents' age profile was fairly homogeneous with more than half aged between 35 and 44.

Dads were much more likely than Mums to be working full time, regardless of their marital status, but seven in ten mums had paid work of some description. Just over half (54%) of parents surveyed left full time education aged 16 or younger and these parents were less likely to work full time than those who left education at a later date. A significant minority (12%) reported that their child had special educational needs, but only 1% overall said he/she attended a special school.

Other findings

Parents describing themselves as 'very involved' tended to provide more practical help to schools than other parents, and to be keenest on increasing their involvement. This suggests that those with the most experience of such involvement are enjoying it.

The majority (58%) of parents believed they had at least equal responsibility with the school for their child's education. Only one in fifty (2%) felt that the responsibility belonged wholly to the school.

One in five (21%) parents claimed to have helped out in class at some point, including one in ten (9%) who claimed to do so whenever there was an opportunity. This was more common among primary school parents than among secondary school parents (28% have helped at least once, compared to 12%). Other practical involvement included helping out elsewhere in school, with fund raising, with the PTA, or with special interest groups such as sports and drama clubs. Only a tiny minority (3%) said they had never been to a parents' evening.

Parents were much more likely to help with homework in the early years, especially as such homework may have explicitly involved them. Seven in ten (71%) parents of children in Year 1 claimed to help with every bit of homework. Understandably this decreases over time (to 5% in Year 11) but so does confidence that the parent can help. A typical reason associated with not helping with homework was that 'teaching methods are different today', and some parents fear they would help in the 'wrong way'.

Six in ten (58%) parents claimed to speak 'regularly' to their child's teacher(s) about at least one issue, usually the child's progress, but a significant proportion (27%) also regularly discussed behaviour. Parents who left school at the end of compulsory education were less confident than other parents when talking to teachers, although only one in ten (9%) said they were not very / not at all confident.

Terms related to the National Curriculum (SATs, performance tables, Key Stages) were better known than the Home School Agreement but some primary school terms were not. One in five (20%) had never heard of the Literacy Hour, and two in five were unaware of the 'daily maths lesson'. In this last case, awareness has actually decreased since 1999.

However, those parents with experience of DfES information sources were significantly better informed about every term, suggesting the various 'glossaries' available have had some impact.

The vast majority of parents knew at least something about what to do if their child is affected by bullying (92%) or if they suspect he/she has a learning difficulty (85%). However, considerably fewer knew how to switch schools (if necessary) or what they would do if their child didn't get the secondary school place they wanted. Even those with experience of DfES materials – while better informed than others – were unlikely to feel they 'know a lot' about these issues.

Parents' evenings and written communication via pupil post are still the most common ways for parents to find out about their child's progress at school. Test results also play a part, especially with older children, and nine in ten parents ask the child for information. Just over half (54%) claimed to have had meetings with teachers outside of the standard parents' evening structure and many primary school parents (59%) cited informal meetings in the playground and so on. This was less common among secondary school parents (23%).

Around one in two (55%) parents were aware of at least one DfES-produced source but only half of these had actually looked at one. Parents were most likely to have looked through Parents + Schools magazine (12%), the only source with a balanced 'user profile'. All the other sources had comparatively upmarket user profiles. Parents + Schools is also generally well received, with four fifths (80%) of parents finding it useful.

Conclusions

At the moment, only a minority of parents feel fully involved in their child's school life. For some this is acceptable, but others want to increase their involvement substantially. However, few parents believe this can be achieved easily. Most of them are resigned to the fact that competing demands on their time will always restrict their involvement.

There is strong support for extra-curricular initiatives that enable parents to help out but there is also recognition that these kinds of projects place extra demands upon schools. Many parents have also concluded that this would require a fundamental shift in public priorities from work to home life.

Less costly information sources – such as Parents+Schools magazine - are welcome but not regarded as the equivalent of face-to-face contact with teachers. Teachers are very highly regarded by parents. Many parents take every opportunity to speak with them and especially enjoy the informal contact in playgrounds. Secondary schools are not seen as so

welcoming, though there is little evidence of dissatisfaction with the way these schools communicate.

It may be that one of the consequences of prizing face-to-face contact with teachers is that parents ignore other sources. Many parents appear to be unaware of the terminology surrounding the most fundamental elements of their children's education which suggests that parents are skim-reading written information at best, expecting teachers to tell them all they need to know. This passivity is borne out in some of the comments recorded in response to open questions. Many parents who claim to want more involvement are waiting for the school to tell them what they can do, rather than actively finding out for themselves.

1 Introduction

The Government's strategy for involving parents in their children's education was first described in the 1997 White Paper 'Excellence in Schools', which recognised that pupils need support from parents to ensure they reach their full potential. This strategy had three strands, around which the majority of the Department's work on parental involvement is based:

- Providing information to parents.
- Giving parents a more effective voice.
- Encouraging families to learn together.

The Department has introduced a number of initiatives to encourage parents to become more closely involved in schools, including the following:

- Schools are required to produce Home-School Agreements, which are developed in consultation with parents. These Agreements set out the roles and responsibilities of both parents and schools in building up a partnership to raise standards in education. They are likely to include such areas as expectations about the standards of education, the school ethos, attendance requirements, discipline, homework and the information parents and schools will give each other. These Agreements aim to engage parents in combating problems of truancy, bullying and unacceptable behaviour.
- Schools are required to publish annual reports and prospectuses to allow parents to make informed decisions about their child's education.
- Schools are also required to make at least one report per year to parents on their child's performance.
- Parents are encouraged to have more of a voice in the way schools are run, for instance by taking part in home-school associations, or becoming parent governors.
- The Department has also increased the amount of information available to parents, and has made this information more easily accessible. Information is available through a special Parents' Centre Website, as well as through a number of publications. *Parents + Schools* is a once-a-term magazine which provides parents with information about children and education in a magazine format which is easily accessible to all parents. It is specifically aimed at parents classified in social grades C2DE, who tend to have less involvement in schooling. The Learning Journey Guides offer information on the National Curriculum and key stages, and are aimed at parents of children of different

ages. In addition, there are a number of topic information sheets which give parents some details about what their children are learning on a range of subjects such as science and history. The sheets offer suggestions for home-based projects which parents and children can do together.

- There have also been a number of publicity campaigns which aim to involve parents more in their children's education. These include campaigns encouraging involvement in reading and maths and others supporting the distribution of *Parents + Schools* and 'The Learning Journey' (a guide to the National Curriculum designed for parents).

1.1 Study aims

Given that all these initiatives are designed to increase parental involvement, there is a need to *measure* their involvement over time. To this end, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) commissioned BMRB to conduct a telephone survey of households containing children of primary or secondary school age (5-16) attending maintained schools. A similar survey was carried out in 1999 with parents of 5-11 year olds (primary school age). The new survey contained some common questions but was largely new.

The survey addressed the following areas:

- How has parents' understanding of educational terms changed since 1999? As well as being aware of these terms, do they fully understand what the terms mean and how they apply to them and their children?

- Are parents aware of the initiatives and campaigns introduced by DfEE/DfES, and to what extent are these understood and seen as relevant to them? How important are different sources of information to parents (e.g. the child's school, other parents, friends and family, mass media campaigns, magazines, newspapers, etc). Which are seen as most credible and which are the preferred sources of information about the child's school? What are their views on the way in which the information was delivered, both in terms of medium and content?

- How have these initiatives impacted on parental involvement in education? Have attitudes changed since the 1999 survey, and if so, have there been changes in parental behaviour? What reasons are there for these changes in behaviour, and what can be done to further stimulate parents to become more involved in their child's education?

1.2 Research Method

In order to carry out the aims and objectives outlined above, BMRB conducted a telephone survey of parents of children aged 5-16 attending state schools (England only). A random

sample of telephone numbers for households in England was sourced, and households were called to screen for the presence of eligible parents. Eligible parents had at least one child aged 5-16 who attended a state school in England – just under a fifth (18%) of households where screening questions were answered were classified as containing at least one eligible parent.

Once eligibility had been established, interviewers collected details on the make-up of the household, including the number of parents[1] present, and the number of children. The computer programme then made a random selection of which parent was to be interviewed, and interviewers called back a minimum of ten times, at different times of the day and different days of the week, in order to complete an interview with that selected parent.

When answering questions about their child's education, parents were asked to answer in the context of just one child, rather than giving views 'on average', perhaps thinking of children of different ages and at different stages of their school life. The computer programme made a selection of one child, and that child's name was entered into the programme to be referred to throughout the questionnaire. For example, a parent may be asked 'How involved do you personally feel in *John's* school life', rather than simply asking how involved they feel in their children's school life in general.

This survey achieved a representative sample of 2019 households containing children of primary and secondary school age (5-16). The fieldwork was carried out from 21st of November to 19th of December 2001. The average interview length was 21 minutes. Full details of the sampling method, fieldwork outcomes and estimates of bias are shown in the technical appendix to this report.

1.3 Arrangement of this report

This report summarises the findings of the project. Following a chapter on sample demographics, we detail the main findings. These are divided into three chapters: 1) active involvement, 2) awareness of initiatives, and 3) communication issues. The questionnaire is appended alongside a technical appendix, which gives full methodological details. Full computer tabulations have been supplied separately.

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[1] For the purposes of this research, we classify step-parents or guardians as 'parents'. However, parents who do not live in the same household as their child were not included because of difficulties in assessing their actual involvement with their child and the child's education.

2 Sample demographics

2.1 Respondent selection and the weighted sample

As far as is possible, the sample achieved in this survey is a representative sample of households containing children of primary and secondary school age (5-16) and, within each of these, one parent was randomly selected to take part in the interview. Some weights were applied to the data to correct for the greater non-response among dads.

All the findings presented in this report are based on weighted data. The total unweighted number of respondents was 2,019.

2.2 The weighted sample profile

For a household to be eligible, at least one child aged between 5 and 16 and attending state school had to be resident in the household. For a respondent to be eligible, he/she needed to have a parental or guardian's relationship towards at least one of these children.

2.2.1 Marital status

In total, one in four (24%) of the households surveyed contained only one parent eligible for interview. The vast majority (89%) of these households were headed by women. Because of this bias, 59% of the final weighted sample is female[2].

Table 2.1 Marital status	
	% of sample
Parents from single parent households	24%
Single dads	3%
Single mums	21%
Parents from two parent households	76%
Partnered dads	38%
Partnered mums	38%
All mums	59%
All dads	41%
	Base: all (2019)

2.2.2 Respondent age

In terms of age, the sample is fairly homogeneous. This was to be expected, given that children's ages formed the basis of the eligibility criteria. More than half (55%) of the

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[2] Clearly, parents who do not live with their children are not represented in this sample. It was felt that it was best to limit the sample to those households *containing* children rather than including all natural parents, regardless of their practical relationships with their children.

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parents surveyed were aged between 35 and 44, with 19% older, and 26% younger. Only a tiny minority were under 25 years old (1% of the sample), or over 54 (2% of the sample).

2.2.3 Ethnicity

Eighty six per cent of the sample described themselves as White British but, of the remaining 14%, only 6% specifically described themselves as being from non-white ethnic minorities. These are very similar figures to those collected from the most recent government surveys (e.g. BCS). One in twenty (5%) reported that English was not their first language, including two thirds of Asians surveyed[3].

2.2.4 Respondent working status

Overall, 49% of parents worked full time (30 hours or more), a further 22% worked part time, and 7% described themselves as self-employed. Only one in four (22%) did not work.

Dads were much more likely than mums to be working full time, regardless of whether they are single parents or part of a two parent household. Eighty per cent of partnered dads worked full time and two thirds (68%) of single dads did the same. In contrast, only 28% of partnered mums worked full time and a similar proportion of single mums (29%) did the same. However, seven in ten (69%) mums did *some* work, though mostly part time.

Table 2.2 Working status

	% of all parents	% of dads	% of mums
Working in a paid job (30 hrs+)	49%	79%	28%
Working in a paid job (less than 30 hrs)	22%	2%	36%
Looking after home	14%	2%	23%
Self employed	7%	11%	4%
'Unemployed'	5%	4%	5%
Others	<1% each	<1% each	<1% each
Base: all (2019), mums (1420), dads(599)			

2.2.5 Parents' education

Just over half (54%) of this sample of parents left full time education aged 16 or younger, and only one in four (23%) stayed in education beyond 18. The later the parent left education, the more likely he/she was working full time. Six in ten (61%) parents who left

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[3] There was no translation provision for parents who lacked sufficient English to complete the interview. From the call records it is estimated that app. 20 further interviews may have been achieved had this provision been available.

education aged 19 or older worked in full time employment, compared to just 45% of parents who left aged 18 or younger. There is a similar pattern with household social grade – a variable derived from the economic status of the chief income earner in the household – with better educated parents living in households with higher social grades. Overall 28% of parents were classified AB but this goes up to 52% of those who left education aged 19 or older.

Table 2.3 Household social grade

HHLD SG	% of all parents	% of those who left education at 16 or earlier	% of those who left education at 17-18	% of those who left education at 19+
AB	28%	17%	30%	52%
C1	27%	23%	32%	29%
C2	22%	29%	20%	10%
DE	23%	31%	18%	9%
Base: all (2019), educated beyond 18 (439), 17-18 (479), 16 or less (1099)				

2.3 Children in the household

As well as randomly selecting the respondent, the interviewer performed a random selection of all *children* resident in the household attending state school in Years 1-11. This child was then used as the subject of the survey where an aggregation of behaviour across children of different ages would have been meaningless. This produced a very balanced sample, with a minimum of 150 interviews focused on children from each School Year, and these evenly balanced between boys and girls.

In nearly half of households (47%), there was only one eligible child, in 40% there were two, and in a small minority of households (13%) there were three or more eligible children. In addition, just over one in four (27%) households contained children younger than the minimum eligible age, and one in six (16%) contained children older than the minimum age, though this included some who are technically adults (aged 18+).

2.4 Special educational needs

Twelve per cent of parents reported that the child selected as the subject of the interview had special educational needs (SEN), although this rose to 17% among parents living in households graded DE. It is also notable that, where the selected child was a boy, 15% of parents reported SEN, compared to only 8% when the selected child was a girl[4].

[4] Only 3 parents refused to answer this question.

Less than half (45%) of parents who reported their child as having SEN said their child had a 'statement' of special needs. One in ten (11%) did not know if the child had such a statement but nearly half (44%) were sure the child did not. Again, just as parents were more likely to say that their son had special educational needs, they were also more likely to say he had a statement. In total, when boys were the subject of discussion, 8% of parents reported that their child had a statement of SEN. The relevant figure for girls was only 3%. The vast majority (91%) of children with SEN attended a mainstream school. In total, only twenty one children attended a special school (1% of the full sample).

2.5 Summary

One quarter of households surveyed contained only one eligible parent, and most of these were headed by women. In total, 59% of the weighted sample of parents is female. The age profile is fairly homogeneous with more than half aged between 35 and 44.

Dads were much more likely than mums to be working full time, regardless of their marital status, but seven in ten mums had paid work of some description. Just over half of parents surveyed left full time education aged 16 or younger and these parents were less likely to work full time.

A significant minority (12%) reported that their child had special educational needs, but only 1% said he/she attended a special school.

3 General involvement

At least half of the questionnaire collected information about what parents actually *do* when they involve themselves in their child's school life. There are a number of different measures, some subjective, some more objective. These include:

- How involved do parents *feel*? And do they want more involvement?
- What do parents do to help the school?
- How much do parents help with homework?
- What kinds of relationship do parents have with their children's teachers?

The questionnaire also investigated the perceived *barriers* to further involvement. This chapter deals with each of these in turn. Before moving on, it is important to note once again that each parent was asked to focus on *one* child only when considering their answers. This method was adopted because it is difficult for a respondent to answer questions precisely if he/she is forced to 'average' across children at very different stages of school life. This child was randomly selected at the start of the interview and referred to by name throughout.

3.1 The subjective measure: how involved do parents *feel*?

The interviewer asked parents how involved they feel *before* asking what he/she actually does to get involved. Respondents answered the question without having been subjected to a series of prompts about the kinds of thing we considered to be 'involvement'.

The question was:

"How involved do you personally feel in your child's school life?"

Just under one in three parents (29%) claimed to be 'very involved' but most (56%) opted for the middle ground and claimed to be 'fairly involved'. Only 13% described themselves as 'not very involved', and only 2% said they were 'not at all involved'.

On most measures of practical involvement there is a noticeable difference in response between those parents claiming to be very involved and those describing themselves as fairly involved. However, there is very little difference in response between those describing themselves as fairly involved and those describing themselves as not very involved. Therefore, it is important to compare the demographic profiles of 'very involved' parents with those who are less involved.

Table 3.1 shows that very involved parents were more likely than less involved parents to be **mums**, **not working full time** and for the selected child to be at **primary school**.

However, the number of school-age children in the household, the particular sex of the selected child, and the respondent's own level of education seem to make little difference to this measure.

Table 3.1 Involvement level

	% of very involved parents	% of less involved parents
Selected child is at primary school	64%	54%
Selected child is a boy	52%	50%
Mum	65%	57%
Married couple	74%	75%
Parent finished education aged 16 or younger	53%	55%
Parent not working full time	59%	48%
More than one child aged 5-16	52%	54%
Base: all very involved (609), less involved (1410)		

Parents' feeling of greater involvement with primary school children is, to some extent, perfectly reasonable. 'Involvement' may encompass simple interest in the child's progress, actual help given to the child (specifically with homework), or involvement with school activities. While the parent's interest is unlikely to decline as the child progresses through school, the increasing complexity of the school work will limit the practical help a parent can give their child. Furthermore, older children tend to want less involvement from their parents in *any* aspect of their lives, including school. They may actively shut the parent(s) out.

However, it is difficult to draw conclusions about which *demographic* factors – if any – have a direct influence on involvement. For instance, it is not clear whether mums are intrinsically more involved than dads, or simply more involved because they are less likely to be working full time.

It is therefore worth comparing mums and dads of approximately the same working status. 26% of full time working mums claimed to be 'very involved', compared to 24% of full time working dads. The difference between the two is not statistically significant. However, 35% of non-full time mums were 'very involved' compared to just 29% of non-full time dads. This difference *is* significant. Clearly mums *are* more likely than dads to feel very involved but only if free of the burdens of full-time work.

3.2 Whether parents would like more involvement

Parents were also asked to agree or disagree with this statement:

"I would like to be more involved in my child's school life"

In total, nearly three quarters (72%) of parents agreed that they would like more involvement, but only a third (35%) 'definitely' agreed. One quarter (26%) did not want any more involvement, including 7% who definitely disagreed with the statement. However, this does not mean they wanted *less* involvement, only that their current involvement level is sufficient.

The 37% who 'tend to agree' with the statement are unlikely to *push* for more involvement. Interestingly, those parents who were already 'very involved' were those who most firmly wanted *more* involvement. More than four in ten (43%) definitely wanted more involvement compared to just 31% of less involved parents. This suggests that those with most experience of involvement are enjoying it. As noted earlier, fairly involved parents were no more committed than not very / not at all involved parents (31% of the former definitely wanted more involvement, compared to 33%of the latter).

Table 3.2 Whether wants more involvement

	% of all parents	% of very involved parents	% of less involved parents
Definitely agree	35%	43%	31%
Tend to agree	37%	28%	41%
Tend to disagree	19%	17%	20%
Definitely disagree	7%	10%	6%
Don't know	2%	2%	2%
		Base: all very involved (609), less involved (1410)	

Those who at least tended to agree that they wanted more involvement were asked what kinds of involvement they would prefer. This was an open-ended question but the answers were later coded into categories by BMRB. The response was quite varied and usually related directly to the parents' own circumstances. Indeed, many took the opportunity to describe how they were *prevented* from being more involved, rather than describing how they would like to be more involved. Many of these took the form of time complaints, especially due to work (14% of respondents). Others expressed a need for more information about their child's education (28%). This was quite distinct from *general* educational information. These parents wanted more information about their child, rather than about (e.g.) the structure of the curriculum. Interestingly, when asked about these issues explicitly, there were few complaints about the quality of information produced by the school or the nature of parent-teacher communication (see section 5 *Communication*).

A small proportion of parents expressed an interest in some specific forms of further involvement, including 10% who wanted to help out in class, 9% who specifically mentioned that they would like to spend more time helping with homework, 8% who wanted to help out elsewhere in school, and 6% who wanted to help with special interest groups (like sports or drama clubs). Most of these parents had never done these things before. Small minorities were even more specific, wanting to help children with special educational needs or with literacy problems.

Table 3.3 Further involvement desired	
	% of parents who want more involvement
Mention of needing more detailed information about own child's education	28%
Complaint about not having enough time / work commitments	14%
Want to help out in class	10%
Want to spend more time helping with homework	9%
Want to help out elsewhere in school	8%
Already involved enough	6%
Want to help with special interest groups	6%
Others	Each <5%
Base: all who definitely / tend to want more involvement (1437)	

As with most open-ended questions, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the problems and needs of different sub-groups of parents. Predictably, parents in full time employment were more likely to mention time constraints or work commitments (20% compared to 10% of non-full time workers) and very involved parents were less likely to require information than less involved parents (22% compared to 30%). However, although interviewers probe as far as possible, he/she can only record what the respondent chooses to say, rather than prompting with specific issues. This means that the figures probably under-represent the total number of parents concerned with each issue, while giving a good picture of what concerns them *most*.

3.3 Responsibility for education

Before moving on to what parents currently do to help with their child's education, it is worth pausing a moment to bring in the results from one of the attitude statements presented to parents near the beginning of the questionnaire.

> *"Thinking in general about children and education, would you say that a child's education is… [wholly the school's responsibility, mainly the school's responsibility, mainly the parents' responsibility, or wholly the parents' responsibility]?"*

The scale was reversed for every other respondent and deliberately did not include an 'equal responsibility' option so that respondents would commit themselves one way or the

other. Despite this approach, nearly four in ten (39%) of parents refused to pick one or the other and insisted that responsibility was equal. Those who did take one of the presented positions tended to believe a child's education was more the school's responsibility than theirs. However, very few picked an extreme position. Only 2% believed it was wholly the school's responsibility, and 4% wholly the parents'. In total, three in five (58%) parents believed they have at least equal responsibility for their child's education[5].

Table 3.4 Responsibility for child's education	
	% of all parents
Wholly the school's responsibility	2%
Mainly the school's responsibility	40%
Mainly the parents' responsibility	15%
Wholly the parents' responsibility	4%
(Both equally)	39%
	Base: all (2019)

Interestingly, the percentage who believe a child's education is wholly or mainly the parents' responsibility varies only slightly between sub-groups. However, when the percentage claiming equal responsibility is added, some differences can be discerned. Mums were more likely than dads to ascribe equal or greater responsibility to parents (60% compared to 54%), and there are similar skews in the data from very involved parents and those with experience of recent DfES materials. However, the response from AB parents is anomalous. They were *less* likely than other parents to ascribe this responsibility to parents (52% compared to 60%) despite tending to be slightly more involved with both their child's school and with homework (despite being more likely to work full time), and having more experience of DfES materials.

3.4 Practical involvement in child's school

Parents were also presented with a series of specific practical activities and asked which they do 'whenever there is an opportunity', which they do 'sometimes' and which they never do. This scale was adopted because of the activities' different frequencies of opportunity. The aim was to find out how far parents' perception of their own involvement is linked to practical activity helping the *school* (as opposed to just their own child). This is an objective measure of involvement, but not the only one.

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[5] A similar question was included in the 1999 survey but the statement was worded differently: "It is the school's responsibility to educate the child, not the parents". One in five (22%) agreed with this statement but that is not comparable either with 'wholly the school's responsibility' or 'mainly the school's responsibility'. The statement was re-worded because answering 'no' to the earlier version may mean either that it is the parents' responsibility, or that it is mainly (but not wholly) the school's.

The practical activities were:

- Going to parents' evenings
- Helping out in class
- Helping out elsewhere in school (for example in the library, dinner duties, school trips and so on)
- Helping with fund-raising activities
- Helping with special interest groups like sports or drama clubs
- Involvement in PTA

Clearly, these activities demand different amounts of commitment. For instance, almost everybody (84%) claimed to go to parents' evenings whenever there is an opportunity, and two thirds (70%) had been involved in fund-raising activities at some point. Other activities may require more of an effort on the part of parents.

One fifth (21%) had helped in the classroom itself, including a core 9% who do so whenever they can. A slightly larger percentage (33%) had helped out elsewhere on the school premises (e.g. in the library, dinner duties etc.). There is quite a lot of crossover between these two activities. Seventy per cent of those who had helped out in class had also helped out elsewhere in the school, and 46% vice versa.

Table 3.5 Practical involvement

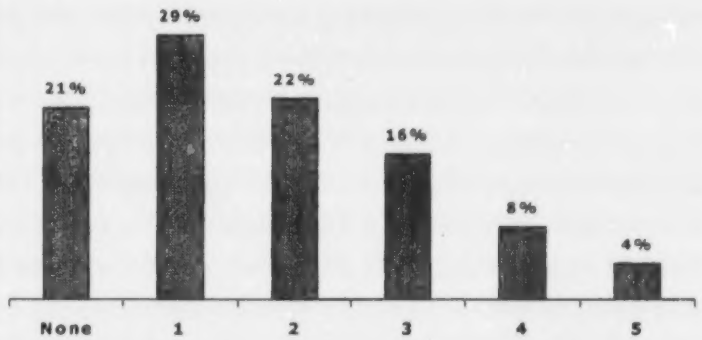
	% whenever there is an opportunity	% sometimes	% never / don't know
Parents' evenings	84%	13%	3%
Fund-raising activities	30%	39%	31%
Help in school outside of class	15%	18%	67%
PTA	13%	16%	71%
Special interest groups	10%	12%	78%
Help in class	9%	12%	79%

Base: all (2019)

Given the high probability that many parents do more than one activity, a numeric variable has been created to give a rough segmentation in terms of parents' activity within school[6]. Excluding parents' evenings – attendance at which is routine – we find that one in five (21%) parents had never done any of the other five activities. At the other extreme, 4% of parents claimed to have taken part in all five!

[6] Each parent was given a number equal to the number of activities which he/she does 'whenever there is an opportunity' or 'sometimes'.

Chart 3.1 Number of activities



Base: All (2019)

It is interesting to further cross this variable with the subjective measures of involvement dealt with earlier. Table 3.6 shows that, on average, very involved parents had taken part in 2.3 types of activity but, while this declines with involvement level, we still find that 60% of those parents who described themselves as not very or not at all involved had taken part in at least one activity.

Table 3.6 Practical activities and self-assessed involvement level

Number of activities ever taken part in	% of very involved parents	% of fairly involved parents	% of less involved parents
0	11%	21%	40%
1	22%	31%	34%
2	23%	23%	15%
3	21%	16%	7%
4	14%	7%	1%
5	9%	2%	2%
mean	2.3	1.6	1.0

Base: all very involved parents (609), fairly involved (1115), less involved (295)

It also seems reasonable to surmise that full-time workers will take part in fewer activities, specifically those during the school day (helping out in class and helping out elsewhere in the school). However, again reflecting the earlier data, working status makes *no difference* among dads but does among mums. For example, nearly a third (31%) of non-full time working mums had helped in class, compared to 16% of full-time working mums. In contrast, there is no significant difference between full-time and non-full time working dads (13% and 15% respectively).

Table 3.7 Helping out in school / sex and working status		
	% ever helped out in class	% ever helped out elsewhere
Mums who work full-time	16%	27%
Mums who do not work full-time	31%	43%
Dads who work full-time	13%	24%
Dads who do not work full-time	15%	22%
Base: all FT mums (403), non-FT mums (1017), FT dads (469), not FT dads (130)		

Another factor that may affect a parent's involvement in school activities is his/her own experience of school. Although no qualitative data was collected, it is notable that those who stayed in education beyond the statutory minimum of 16 were more likely to have been involved. This may well reflect a more positive experience of their own school days. Parents who stayed in education were more likely to be in full-time work so it is best to compare non-full time workers together. One third (33%) of those staying on beyond 16 had helped out in class, and half (49%) had helped out elsewhere. This compares with 24% and 33% respectively among parents who left at 16. This last group make up 54% of the full sample but this will reduce over time as more people stay in education beyond 16. However, they are not necessarily staying on at *school* so it is not possible to infer that involvement in school activities will increase naturally in response to longer periods spent in education.

A final factor is the school year of the child. It has already been noted that parents feel less involved when the child is at secondary school. This is matched here as well: just over a quarter (28%) had helped out in a primary school classroom (including 12% who claimed to take every opportunity), compared to 12% who had helped out in a secondary school classroom. However, given the increased complexity of the work, this still seems high, especially as 5% claimed to help whenever there is an opportunity. It is possible that a minority answered hypothetically – i.e. they *would* take every opportunity if offered – but the question is not especially ambiguous, so we can only assume this data is correct. It is, however, worth noting that the frequency of opportunity in secondary schools is probably lower than in primary schools, so the percentages saying they help 'whenever there is an opportunity' are not directly comparable.

3.5 Barriers to involvement

Respondents were asked what prevented their further involvement. The precise question wording was:

"Is there anything that stops you getting involved with <child>'s school life?"

The interviewer did not prompt the respondents in any way but was provided with a list of codes for categorising the response. Very few mentioned problems emanating from the

child's school, or difficulties with the style of education. Most parents focused exclusively on the competing demands in their own lives. Three quarters (75%) of full time workers explicitly mentioned work commitments, and 14% of parents simply cited 'lack of time'. It is also noticeable that the demands of other children or problems with childcare impact heavily on those with very young children. This was mentioned by a third (34%) of parents with children under 5. Other factors may well prove to be barriers to further involvement - there is no reason why parents should recognise them all – but the response to this question gives a good indication of what is 'top of mind'. The main problem, as far as parents were concerned, is one of time.

Table 3.8: Barriers to further involvement	
	% of all parents
Work commitments	54%
Lack of time	14%
Demands of other children / childcare difficulties	13%
Others	Each <3%
No specific barriers	14%
	Base: all (2019)

3.6 Homework

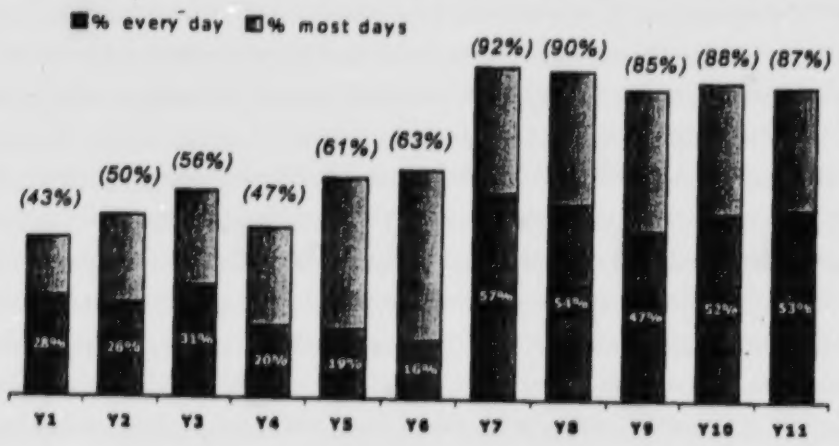
Two other elements of parental involvement were also included in the questionnaire: helping with homework and the relationship parents have with teachers. These are probably the key elements of involvement since only a minority were closely involved in activities within the school itself.

The first question was:

"How often does <child> get homework?"

The chart below shows the response split by the school year of the child. The percentage figure in the dark section of each bar shows that (for example) where the selected child was in Year 1, 28% of parents believed him/her to get homework every day. The lighter section of each bar adds those believing their child gets homework 'most days', and the bracketed percentage shows a combined figure for 'regular homework'.

Chart 3.2: Amount of Homework



Base: All where selected child in School Year (n varies - 157 to 229)

The most noticeable aspect of the chart is the absence of a smooth curve showing more homework as a child gets older. There is a gentle increase in regular homework between Years 1 and 6 (covering Key Stages 1 and 2), followed by a sudden leap between Years 6 and 7 (as Key Stage 3 begins). Thereafter, there is no increase either in the percentage claiming the child has homework 'every day' or the overall percentage for 'regular' homework. Homework in Years 1 and 2 would mainly consist of reading or sharing a book with a parent or carer and therefore it is important to recognise that these data are dependent upon parents' awareness of the amount of homework their child gets and on parental perception of what constitutes homework.

At the start of a child's school life, he/she will need a great deal of guidance when working outside of the classroom. Their homework may explicitly involve the parents, especially as so much will involve reading. As the child progresses through school, they need less direct help and may, therefore, feel no need to make their parents aware of all the homework they do. In a third stage, teenagers may actively block their parents out as they seek greater independence in all aspects of their lives. Alternatively, it may not be possible to get higher scores than those recorded for Year 7 children. When a parent says their child gets homework 'every day', he/she is making a definite statement. 'Most days' may be more of a presumption. An explanation may be that as children get older they are given more complex tasks for homework (in order to extend learning), this, coupled with the homework guidelines issued by the DfES, encourages homework arrangements to be flexible to allow pupils to take part in after-school activities, which means that it is quite usual for homework tasks to be designed to take more than one day to complete.

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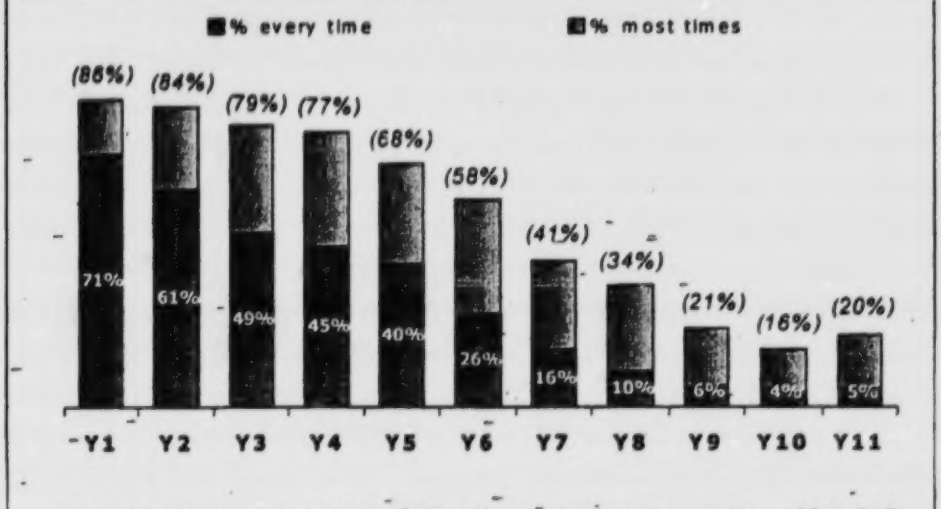
Therefore, the overall amount of homework set over a week or a fortnight might be the same, but is distributed differently - Thus, 'most days' could be interpreted as 'regular' homework.

The same question was asked in the 1999 survey, although only to primary school age children (aged 5-11). A third (31%) of parents believed their child got homework every day, and a similar number (32%) said 'most days'. This survey found lower figures of 24% and 29% respectively among the same age group. The two samples are not directly comparable because of the different respondent selection procedures (see technical appendix) but is, at least, an indication that parents were not observing *more* homework in 2001.

3.7 How often the parent helps with homework

A similar chart to chart 3.2 is displayed below, this time showing how often parents help with homework when the child gets it. This time, there *is* an explicable curve: parents are much more likely to help in the early years than in the later years, and the decline in involvement is steady year-by-year, apart from the very final year when the child will take GCSEs. It also supports the hypothesis that homework in the early years explicitly involves parents (71% help every time in Year 1) while, in later years, 'help' may be limited to encouragement. However, helping every time or most times in later years may involve more time because the child gets a greater volume of more complex homework.

Chart 3.3 How often parent helps with Homework



Base: All where selected child in School Year and gets hwk (n varies - 152 to 217)

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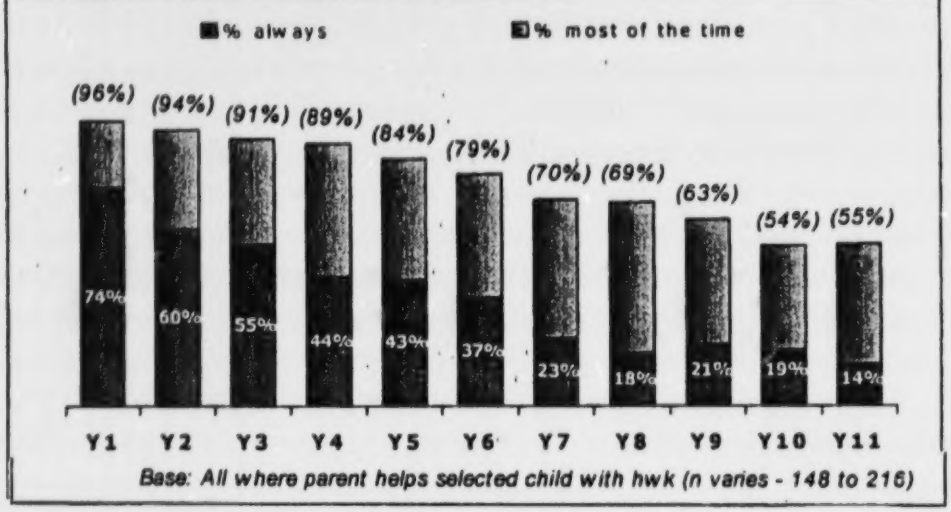
There are a couple of other notable differences that are not linked to the age of the child. Dads help less often than mums, even taking into account their greater likelihood of working full time. Looking only at parents who do not work full time, forty per cent of mums helped said they help 'every time' compared to just 25% of dads. As in other measures, we recorded no difference between full time working dads and non-full time working dads but significantly greater activity among non-full time mums than among full time mums (40% help 'every time' compared to 31%). It is also notable that parents with experience of DfES materials help more often than those with no experience (37% helped every time compared to 30%).

3.8 Confidence when helping with homework

There are various natural reasons why parents are less likely to help with older children's homework but chart 3.4 shows that their *confidence* when helping with homework also declines the older the child gets. This almost certainly reflects the greater complexity of homework. Nonetheless, we still find that more than half (55%) of parents say they are at least confident 'most of the time' when helping a child in Year 11.

Chart 3.4 Confidence when helping homework



Base: All where parent helps selected child with hwk (n varies - 148 to 216)

Therefore, it is likely that their reduced 'help' is more closely linked with the independent nature of the homework than with a lack of confidence on the parent's part. In fact, there seems no link between confidence and willingness to help. For example, while dads were more confident than mums (46% are 'always' confident helping with homework, compared with 34% of mums), they were much less likely to help (24% help every time, compared to 37% of mums). (Table 3.9)

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Table 3.9 Confidence in helping with homework		
	% dads	% mums
Always confident	46%	34%
Confident most of the time	39%	39%
Confident some of the time	13%	22%
Never confident	0%	2%
Depends what it is	2%	2%
Base: all who help with homework (1894), dads (559), mums (1335)		

Similarly, parents who stayed in education longest were most confident but no more likely to help.

Around one in five (21%) parents were sometimes or never confident helping with homework and they were asked why that is. The interviewers did not prompt them in any way. Most respondents said the same thing: they feel too distant from the kinds of work their children do. Four in ten (41%) said that they didn't understand modern teaching methods. Others (16%) explained that they weren't taught certain subjects when *they* were at school. A surprisingly large number (38%) admitted that they 'don't understand' the work their child does. It should be borne in mind that this group of parents is skewed towards those with older children. The work these children do is more complex and their parents attended school longer ago.

Table 3.10: Reasons for not feeling confident	
	% of parents who sometimes/never feel confident helping with homework
Different teaching methods these days	41%
Don't understand the work my child does	38%
Wasn't taught certain subjects at school	16%
Might confuse child if do it wrong	8%
Mention of particular subject(s) where parent is not confident	5%
Others	Each <3%
Base: all who sometimes / never feel confident helping with homework (437)	

3.9 Relationships with teachers

The questionnaire also dealt with parents' relationships with their child's school and with the teachers at the school. It covered such issues as communication, confidence, and what parents think of the school's attitude towards them.

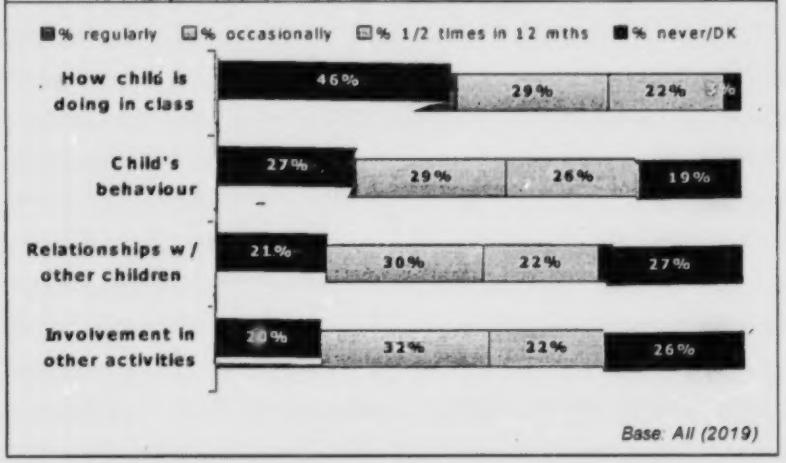
3.9.1 What parents talk about with teachers

Early in the interview, all parents were presented with a list of possible discussion subjects and asked how often they talk with their named child's teacher about each. The subjects were:

- How the child is doing in class
- Child's behaviour at school
- Relationships with other children (perhaps bullying or other issues)
- Child's involvement in sport or other extra-curricular activities

Nearly six in ten (58%) regularly spoke with teachers about at least one subject, with primary school parents more likely to than secondary school parents (62% compared to 53%). Predictably, parents who assessed themselves as 'very involved' had significantly more contact with teachers than other parents. Nearly three quarters (74%) of very involved parents claimed to speak to teachers regularly on at least one subject, compared to 55% of 'fairly involved' parents and 39% of 'not very/not at all involved' parents. Overall responses for each subject are shown in chart 3.5.

Chart 3.5 What parents talk about with teachers



Just under one in two (46%) parents claimed to regularly talk to teachers about how their child is doing in class, with a further three in ten (29%) talking about this occasionally. However, 3% of parents claimed to never talk with their child's teacher about their child's progress in class.

Fewer parents claimed to regularly talk to teachers about the other subjects shown above. A quarter (27%) claimed to regularly talk about their child's behaviour, with parents of

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children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) most likely to talk about this regularly (44% compared with 24% of parents of other children). Related to this, one in five (21%) parents claimed to regularly talk about their child's relationships with other children (perhaps bullying or other issues), and parents of children with SEN were again more likely to talk about this regularly (32% compared with 19% of other parents).

One in five (20%) regularly discussed their child's involvement in sport or other extra-curricular activities. In addition, 15% of parents claimed to regularly speak to parents about other subjects. Subjects mentioned included the child's personality, homework, health concerns or specific subjects such as maths or literacy. Small numbers of parents said they talk to their child's teachers about problems at home (2% of the sample).

Although mums who were not working full time were notably more likely to be involved with their child's school on practical matters (such as helping in class, with fundraising, etc.), they were no more likely to say that they talk regularly with their child's teachers about any of the subjects shown above

It therefore appears that the frequency of communication with the child's school is largely driven by need to talk with the teacher (in the case of parents of children with SEN), or because opportunities regularly arise (in the case of parents of primary school children).

Table 3.10 What primary and secondary school parents talk to teachers about regularly

% of parents who talk regularly about:	Parents with a selected child in Primary School	Parents with a selected child in Secondary School
How child is doing in class	51%	39%
Child's behaviour	27%	26%
Relationships with other children	22%	20%
Involvement in other activities	20%	20%
Base: all primary school parents (1158), secondary school parents (861)		

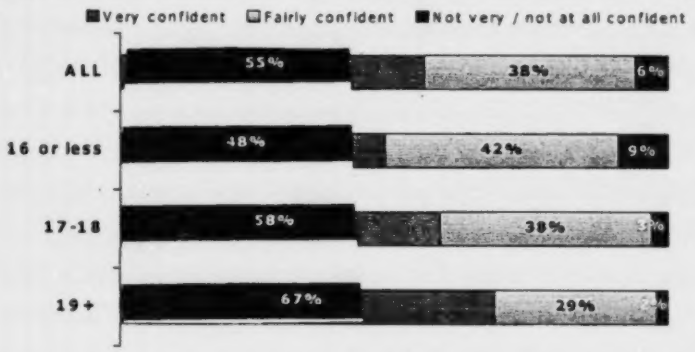
3.9.2 Parents' confidence when talking to teachers

All parents who ever talk to their child's teachers were asked how confident they feel when talking with the teacher. Chart 3.6 shows that the vast majority of parents felt confident talking to teachers, with over half saying they feel 'very confident'. However, there is some notable variation in confidence.

Confidence is higher the longer the parent stayed in education. Only half (48%) of parents who left full time education at 16 or younger said that they feel very confident talking to their child's teachers, compared with over two thirds (67%) of those who left education aged 19 or older. Clearly there is some scope to improve the confidence of parents who left

school after completing their compulsory education, as these comprise half of the population of parents.

Chart 3.6 Confidence when talking with teachers



Base: All who talk to teachers (1991), with TEA 16 or less (1077), 17-18 (476), 19+ (436)

There were few other demographic differences in levels of confidence, although parents of children with SEN were slightly less likely to say that they feel very or fairly confident (89% compared with 94% for other parents).

However, such parents comprise half of those describing themselves as 'very involved' in their child's school and *these* parents were more likely to say they feel confident in talking with their child's teachers. It may be that they are more likely to get involved because they feel more confident, although it may also be true that their involvement has helped them to feel more confident in communicating about their child's education. The flipside is that parents who left at 16 and did *not* describe themselves as very involved are much less confident than other groups: only 41% were 'very confident' compared to 57% of those who left later.

Table 3.11 Confidence when talking with teachers

	% of very involved parents	% of fairly involved parents	% of not very / not at all involved parents
Very confident	71%	50%	44%
Fairly confident	25%	44%	41%
Not very confident	2%	5%	10%
Not at all confident	1%	1%	2%
Depends on teacher	1%	1%	1%
Don't know	0%	0%	1%

Base: all who talk to teacher – very involved (604), fairly involved (1101), not very/not at all involved (286)

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In addition, it is clear that more confident parents tend to talk to teachers more regularly about most aspects of their child's education, the only exception being their child's behaviour.

The 1999 study conducted by MORI found that just under a quarter (22%) of parents of primary school children worried that they might be labelled a 'troublemaker' if they talked too much to teachers. This question was also asked in 2001, but fewer (14%) parents of children in primary school agreed with this statement, and only 4% definitely agreed. Parents of children in secondary school held similar views, although they were slightly more likely to feel this way (18% agreed, 7% definitely).

Less confident parents and parents who were least involved in their child's education were also more likely to agree that if they talk too often to teachers at their child's school they will be labelled a troublemaker. It may be that they are less involved and therefore less confident about their child's education because they are worried about being labelled a troublemaker.

Table 3.12 'If I talk too often to teachers at my child's school, I will be labelled a trouble maker'

	% of very confident parents	% of fairly confident parents	% of not very / not at all confident parents
Definitely agree	6%	4%	14%
Tend to agree	8%	12%	20%
Tend to disagree	25%	33%	25%
Definitely disagree	59%	47%	37%
Don't know	3%	3%	3%

Base: all who talk to teacher – very confident (1072), fairly confident (774), not very/not at all confident (123)

3.10 Attendance

All parents were asked how important it was to make sure their child attends school regularly (and on time). They were given a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 was 'not at all important' and 5 was 'extremely important'. Almost all (96%) parents said that they believed this to be extremely important.

Table 3.13 Importance of making sure child attends school regularly and on time	
	% of total sample
1 – not at all important	1%
2	
3	
4	3%
5 – extremely important	96%
	Base: all 2019

However, almost immediately afterwards, just under half (49%) of all parents said that they would be happy to take their child out of school during term time, for example for a summer holiday. Parents who left education aged 16 were more likely to agree with this than those who completed their education later (53% compared to 45% of those who left later), although they were no less likely to believe attendance to be extremely important.

In addition, parents of children in primary school were more likely to feel that it is acceptable to take their child out of school during term time than parents of children in secondary school (53% compared to 44%).

Table 3.14 Whether would take child out of school during term time			
	% who think it acceptable	% who do not think it acceptable	% who think it depends on circumstances
ALL	49%	43%	8%
Left education at 16 or younger	53%	40%	8%
Left education at 17-18	49%	44%	7%
Left education at 19+	41%	51%	8%
Primary school parent	53%	39%	8%
Secondary school parent	44%	48%	8%
Base: all (2019), TE:16 or under (1099), 17-18 (479), 19+ (439), primary school parents (1158), secondary school parents (861)			

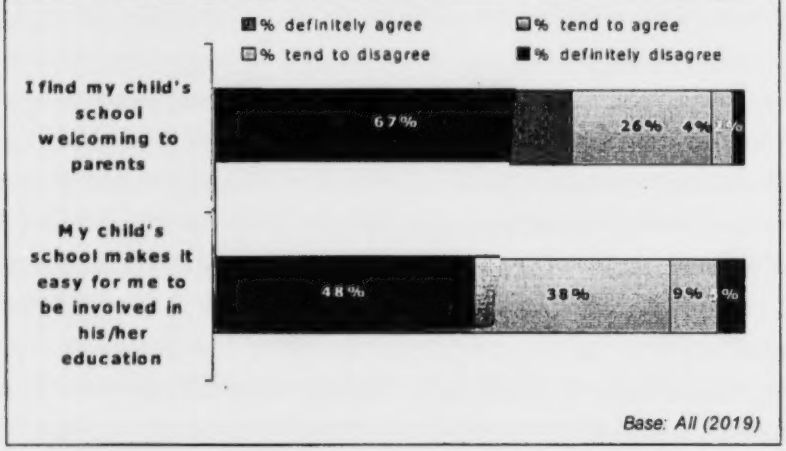
3.11 School's attitude to parents

As well as discussing parents' relationships with their child's school, the interviewer also asked how they see the school's attitude towards *them*. The interviewer presented two statements about the school's attitude and asked parents how far they agreed or disagreed with each one. The statements were:

- 'I find my child's school welcoming to parents'
- 'My child's school makes it easy for me to be involved in his/her education'

Responses are shown in chart 3.7.

Chart 3.7 School's attitude towards parents



Most parents were largely happy with the school's attitude towards them. Two thirds (67%) definitely agreed that they find their child's school welcoming to parents, with only 6% disagreeing. Similarly, the vast majority (85%) agreed that their child's school makes it easy for them to be involved in their education, and just under half (48%) 'definitely' agreed. However, this time more parents (13%) disagreed with the statement, with 5% definitely disagreeing. These responses chime with those collected when the interviewer asked about the barriers to further involvement. Few explicitly complained about the school then.

Parents of children in secondary school were slightly less positive about the school's attitude towards them than parents of children in primary school. While 72% of primary school parents definitely agreed that the school was welcoming, only 61% of secondary school parents felt the same. Similarly, only 41% of secondary school parents agreed that their child's school makes it easy for them to be involved in their education, compared to 53% of primary school parents. In addition, parents who do not feel very involved or confident in communicating with the school's teachers tended to be much less positive about schools. Parents of children with SEN were also less positive.

Although the majority of parents felt positive about the attitude of their child's school, it seems that those parents who felt less positive about the school are those who would need most help to get more involved with their child's education. It appears that there is some room for improvement here, to help these parents become more positive and through this more confident and more involved.

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3.12 Summary

Around one in three parents felt very involved in their child's school life, though primary school parents were more likely to feel this way than secondary school parents. Those describing themselves as 'very involved' tended to provide more practical help to schools than other parents, and to be keenest on increasing their involvement. Most of those who felt they weren't involved enough cited time pressures, especially from work.

The majority (58%) of parents believed they had at least equal responsibility with the school for their child's education, though only one in five felt they had *more* responsibility than the school.

One in five parents claimed to have helped out in class at some point, including one in ten who claimed to do so whenever there was an opportunity. This was more common among primary school parents than among secondary school parents. Other practical involvement included helping out elsewhere in school, with fund raising, with the PTA, or with special interest groups such as sports and drama clubs. Only a tiny minority (3%) admitted they had never been to a parents' evening.

Parents were much more likely to help with homework in the early years, especially as such homework may explicitly involve them. Understandably this decreases over time but so does confidence that the parent can help. A typical complaint is that teaching methods are different today, and some parents fear they will help in the 'wrong way'.

Six in ten parents claimed to regularly speak to their child's teacher(s) about at least one issue, usually child's progress, but a significant proportion (27%) also regularly discussed behaviour. Parents who left school at the end of compulsory education were less confident than other parents, although only one in ten admitted they were not very/not at all confident. However they may be the parents who most need to build a relationship with the school and its teachers. A significant minority also felt that they would be labelled as 'trouble makers' if they talked *too* much. Nonetheless, almost all parents were happy with the school's attitude towards them with many finding the school welcoming and willing to involve them.

4 Awareness and understanding of education initiatives

The Department has introduced a number of new educational initiatives over recent years, and the 1999 MORI project sought to establish awareness of these initiatives. In 2001, we again asked parents whether they had heard of a number of initiatives, and this chapter reports on their awareness, and what they understand about these initiatives.

4.1 Home School Agreement

The Home School Agreement is a partnership document drawn up by the school - in consultation with parents –which parents and teachers, and in some cases children, are invited to sign. It sets out what is expected of pupils and parents and how the school approaches teaching, learning and behaviour. All parents should be asked to sign one of these.

All parents were asked if they had heard of a Home School Agreement, and just under two thirds (65%) had, although only three in ten (29%) parents said that they knew a lot about it. Over a third (35%) had never heard of the term, which is somewhat concerning given that all parents should have been invited to sign a Home School Agreement in respect of their child. However, it may be the case that the *other* parent had signed the agreement and, indeed, dads were more likely than mums to say that they had never heard of the agreement (47% compared to 27%). It is also possible that some schools have given their Home School Agreement a different name.

There were no differences in awareness between parents of children of different ages. Parents who had looked at some of the information sources produced by DfES (e.g. *Parents + Schools* Magazine, DfES parents websites) were more likely to say they know a lot about the Home School Agreement (46% knew a lot).

Table 4.1 Awareness of Home School Agreement

	% of all parents	% seen DfES information source
Know a lot about it	29%	46%
Know a little about it	27%	30%
Heard of it only	8%	6%
Never heard of it	35%	18%
	Base: all (2019), seen DfES sources (529)	

Comparing these results with those found in the 1999 study, it should be noted that different scales were used to measure awareness. However, in 1999 one in four (26%) parents of children at primary school did not know what was meant by the Home School

Agreement, compared with a third (36%) of their counterparts in 2001 who had never heard of the term. While the samples are not directly comparable, it seems that there have not been any improvements in awareness over the past two years.

All parents who said they had heard of the term were asked to describe what it means. Their responses were recorded verbatim and some are shown below:

"An agreement between the parents, the pupil and the school"

"The parents have to take responsibility for... attendance, homework etc.. The child has to take responsibility for homework and behaviour"

"The child agrees to behave in a way acceptable to the school, and the school agrees to put the child's education first..."

"All about school rules, uniform and so on. It gives details about how much homework is expected at each level"

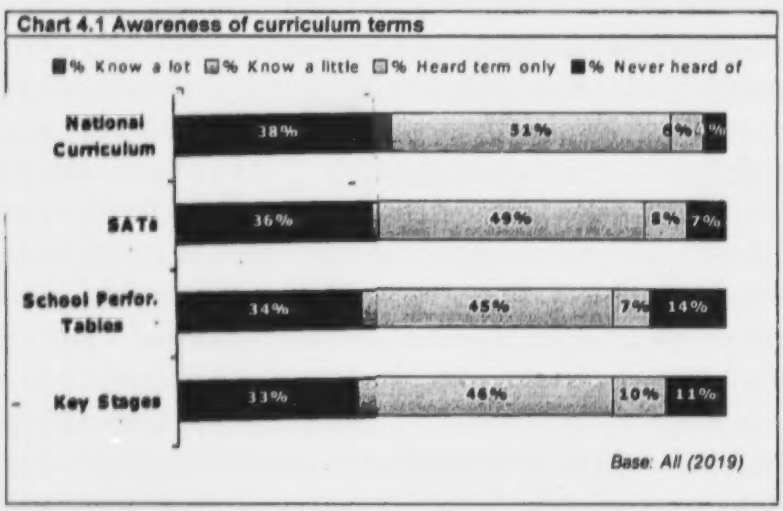
"It's a paper exercise and it serves no purpose"

"Your part of the bargain is to check for head lice and homework"

4.2 Awareness of other terms

Parents were also asked how much they knew about other terms related to their child's school life. Chart 4.1 shows awareness of terms related to the curriculum.

Chart 4.1 Awareness of curriculum terms



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Almost all parents had heard of the National Curriculum, with only 4% who had never heard of the term. Two fifths (38%) of parents said they knew a lot about what it means, and a half (51%) said they knew a little. There were no differences in awareness between mums and dads, or parents of children of different ages. There has been no notable increase in awareness since 1999.

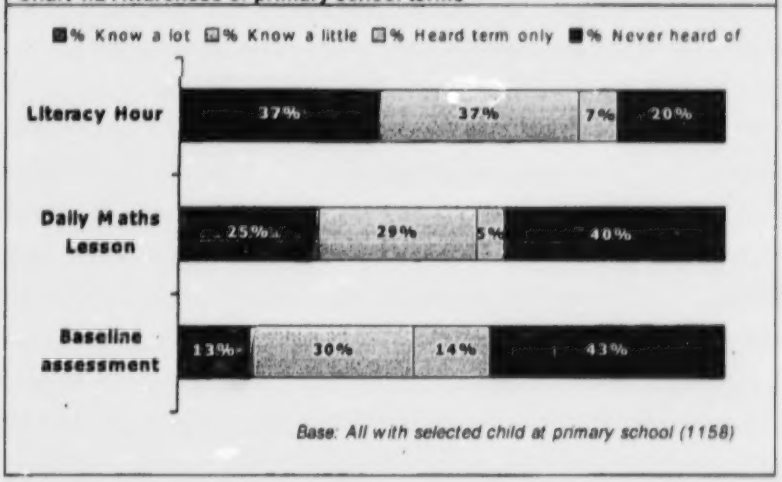
Over nine in ten parents (93%) had heard of National Curriculum Levels or SATs, and 36% claimed to know a lot about what the term means. Mums were more likely than dads to say they know a lot about the term (40% compared to 32%), as were parents who left school later themselves (55% if parents left school aged 19 or older, compared with only 27% of parents who left school at 16). Only 8% of primary school parents said that they had never heard of the term, a similar result to that achieved in 1999 (11% had never heard of the term).

Similar proportions of parents had heard of school performance tables, and only one in seven (14%) had never heard of them. A third (34%) claimed to know a lot about school performance tables. In 1999, 12% parents of children in primary school said they had never heard of school performance tables, and a similar proportion (14%) said this in 2001.

Only one in ten (11%) parents had never heard of Key Stages, and a third (33%) of parents said that they know a lot about them. Once again, these results are very similar to those achieved in 1999, where 10% of parents of children at primary school had never heard of Key Stages (11% in 2001).

Some terms only applied to children at primary school, and therefore only parents of children in years 1-6 were asked about them. Chart 4.2 shows the results.

Chart 4.2 Awareness of primary school terms



Base: All with selected child at primary school (1158)

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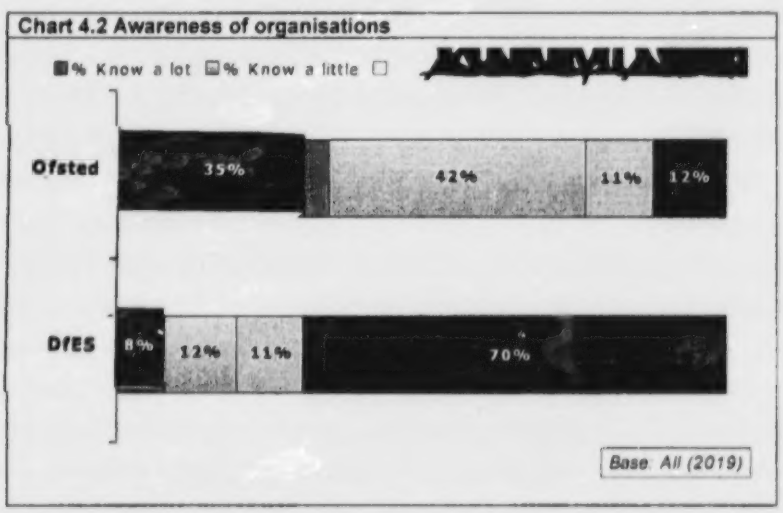
Two fifths (37%) of parents of children in primary school knew a lot about the Literacy Hour, and a similar proportion knew a little about it. However, a fifth (20%) of parents of children in primary school said that they had never heard of the Literacy Hour. This is similar to the 1999 result (18% had never heard of it). Mums were more likely to have heard of the term – only 13% had never heard of it, compared with 30% of dads.

The Daily Maths Lesson and Baseline Assessments were less known, with over two fifths of parents of children in primary school unaware of each term. Only a quarter (25%) said they know a lot about the Daily Maths Lesson and only one in eight (13%) claimed to know a lot about Baseline Assessments. Both these terms were less well known than in 1999 – at that time, only a fifth (19%) of parents of children in primary school had never heard of the Daily Maths Lesson, and three in ten (31%) had never heard of Baseline Assessments.

All parents were asked how much they know about two organisations related to their child's education – Ofsted and DfES. Chart 4.3 shows their responses.

Chart 4.2 Awareness of organisations



Ofsted was better known than DfES, although 12% parents had never heard of Ofsted. Seven in ten parents claimed that they had never heard of DfES. However, the Department had only recently changed its name.

In order to gauge over-claiming, parents were also asked how much they know about a dummy initiative – 'Science for Life'. Although seven in ten parents said that they had never heard of the initiative, 4% claimed to know a lot about it, and 15% said they knew a little. It is possible that some parents may have muddled it with the term 'Science Year',

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but putting this result into context, the same proportion claimed to have heard of 'Science for Life' as said they had heard of DfES.

Throughout, parents who claimed to be 'very involved' in their child's education were better informed about the terms and initiatives. There was little difference in awareness between those who said they were 'fairly involved', and those who were not involved in their child's education.

Table 4.2 Awareness of terms (know a lot about what term means) – involvement of parents		
	% of very involved parents	% of other parents
National Curriculum	47%	35%
Literacy hour	47%	33%
Nat. Curriculum levels or SATs	44%	33%
Ofsted	42%	32%
School performance tables	41%	31%
Key stages	40%	31%
Home School Agreement	35%	27%
Daily maths lesson	31%	21%
Baseline assessment	17%	10%
DfES	9%	7%
Base: very involved parents (609), others (1410)		

There were few differences in awareness between parents of children in primary or secondary school, despite the fact that parents in primary school were generally more involved in their child's education. However, those parents who had seen at least one of the DfES produced publications (e.g. *Parents + Schools* Magazine, DfES parents websites) were better informed than those who had not seen any of these publications. It therefore appears that these publications have been effective in informing parents about new terms and initiatives.

Table 4.2 Awareness of terms – awareness of DfES information sources		
	% of parents who had seen DfES source(s)	% of other parents
National Curriculum	59%	31%
Nat. curriculum levels or SATs	56%	30%
Literacy hour	55%	30%
Ofsted	54%	29%
Key stages	52%	27%
School performance tables	51%	28%
Home School Agreement	46%	24%
Daily maths lesson	39%	20%
Baseline assessment	23%	9%
DfES	17%	5%
Base: parents seen DfES sources (529), others (1490)		

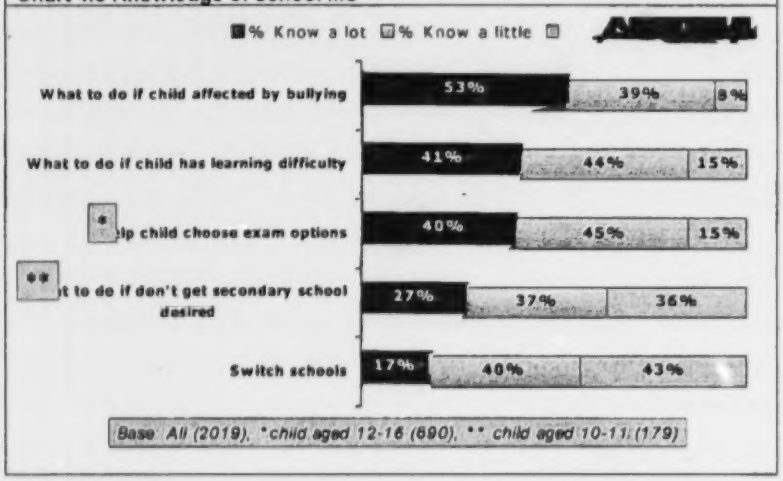
4.3 Knowledge of school life

As well as presenting the terminology, interviewers asked parents how much they felt they knew about how to deal with certain situations that may arise in the child's school. The situations were:

- How to switch schools
- Helping child choose exam options
- What to do if child doesn't get secondary school place you wanted
- What to do if your child is affected by bullying (that is, if your child is being bullied or is bullying other children)
- What to do if you think your child has a learning difficulty

Responses are shown in chart 4.3.

Chart 4.3 Knowledge of school life



Over half (53%) of parents said they know a lot about what to do if their child is affected by bullying (either being bullied or bullying other children), and only 8% said that they did not know anything about what to do.

Only 15% parents said they know nothing at all about what to do if their child has a learning difficulty. Two fifths (41%) said they know a lot about the subject, and a similar proportion said they know a little about it. Parents of children with special education needs were more likely than other parents to say that they know a lot about what to do (69% parents of children with SEN, 37% other parents), and this rises to 79% if the child has a statement of SEN.

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Only parents of children aged 12-16 were asked how much they know about how to help their child choose their exam options. Two fifths (40%) of these parents said that they know a lot and a similar proportion said they know a little. Once again, only 15% parents of children in secondary school know nothing at all about the subject.

Because it was only relevant to them, parents of children aged 10-11 were the only ones asked about what to do if they don't get secondary school place they want for their child. Perhaps because the problem has not arisen, few parents were well informed about the subject, with only a quarter saying they know a lot and a third (36%) not knowing anything at all.

Again, perhaps because the problem has not arisen, very few parents were well informed about how to switch their child's school. Only 17% said they know a lot about the subject, and over two fifths (43%) know nothing at all.

There were few demographic differences in response, but again those who had been exposed to DfES publicity materials tended to be better informed.

Table 4.4 Proportion of parents who know a lot about their child's school life – awareness of DfES information sources

	% of parents who had seen DfES source(s)	% of other parents
How to switch schools	25%	14%
How to help child choose his/her exam options	57%	36%
What to do if your child doesn't get the secondary school place you wanted	38%	23%
What to do if your child is affected by bullying	64%	50%
What to do if you think your child has a learning difficulty	55%	37%
Base: parents seen DfES sources (529 but filtered where appropriate), others (1490 and filters)		

4.4 Summary

Many parents are unaware of the various labels given to recent education initiatives. More than one in three had never heard of the Home School Agreement, despite the fact that all of them should have been invited to sign one. Terms related to the National Curriculum (SATs, performance tables, Key Stages) were better known but many parents were unaware of some primary school terms. One in five had never heard of the Literacy Hour, and two in five were unfamiliar of each of the 'Daily Maths Lesson' and 'Baseline Assessment'. In these two cases, awareness has actually *declined* since 1999.

However, those parents with experience of DfES information sources were significantly better informed about every term, suggesting the various 'glossaries' available have had some impact.

The vast majority of parents knew at least something about what to do if their child is affected by bullying or if they suspect he/she has a learning difficulty. However, considerably fewer knew how they would switch schools (if necessary) or what they would do if their child didn't get the secondary school place they wanted. This suggests most parents have not considered the possibility. Even those with experience of DfES materials – while better informed than others – were unlikely to feel they know 'a lot' about these issues.

5 Communication

A significant section of the questionnaire dealt with the issue of *communication*, both formal and informal. It asked how parents find out about their child's progress, how often they receive written communication from school, and how good it is. It also dealt with DfES-produced, generalist sources such as *Parents + Schools* magazine, and asked how far they had influenced parental activity. Finally, the interviewer asked parents to suggest the best methods for further involving parents in their children's education.

5.1 How parents find out how child is getting on at school

All parents were asked: *"In which of these ways do you find out about how <child> is getting on at school?"*. The interviewer then read out a list of various sources of information.

Over nine in ten parents (94%) said they are informed by going to parents' evenings. Parents who claimed 'never' to go to parents' evenings were more likely to say that they find out about their child's school life from their partner (72%, compared to only 46% on average). This implies that, even though these parents are not going to such evenings, at least one of the child's parents is. Dads are over-represented among non-attendees, making up 72% of the parents who claimed to never go to parents' evenings, while comprising only 41% of the full sample.

Nine in ten (92%) said they found out how their child was getting on via school reports; 88% reported talking to their child and 84% mentioned notes from school. Three quarters (77%) cited test results, although parents of children in Years 1 and 2 were much less likely to mention them (50% and 63% respectively).

Just over half of respondents (54%) mentioned attending meetings specifically about their child. Parents of children with SEN were more likely to say this (77% compared to 51% where the child does not have SEN). Just over two-fifths (44%) said they talk to teachers informally. A significantly larger proportion of primary school parents than secondary school parents cited this as a way of finding out: 59% compared to 23% respectively. Those parents who said they are very confident talking to teachers were also more likely to cite such meetings (49% if very confident with teachers, 39% if fairly confident and 28% if not very or at all confident). Four in ten (40%) said they are informed when they attend other special meetings for parents, and a similar proportion (35%) said they were informed by other parents.

Table 5.1 Methods of communication from school	
	% of sample
Parents' evenings	94%
School reports	92%
From child	88%
Written communication from school	84%
Test results	77%
Specific meetings about child (not parents' evenings)	54%
From partner	46%
Informal talk with teachers	44%
Other special meetings	40%
From other parents	35%
	Base: all (2019)

When parents were asked which way was the **most useful**, the majority mentioned some sort of fact-to-face contact with teachers. Parents' Evenings came out on top (41%), specific meetings about the child came second (13%) and around one in ten cited informal meetings (11%).

5.2 Quality of school's information

Interviewers presented a couple of statements relating to the quality of information from the school and asked parents whether they agreed or disagreed with each one. The statements were –

- 'My child's school gives me clear information on how my child is getting on'
- 'A lot of information given by the school about my child's education is full of jargon'

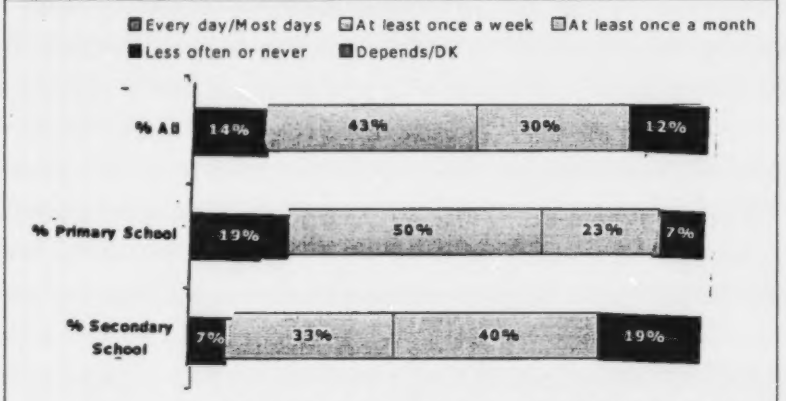
Eighty five per cent (85%) agreed that the school gives them clear information on how their child is getting on, including 56% who 'definitely' agreed. Only 5% said they definitely disagreed. However, a slightly greater proportion definitely agreed that 'a lot of information given by the school is full of jargon', and one in four at least trended to agree. It seems that, while schools tend to give parents clear information about how their child is getting on, the more general information alienates a minority. As we saw earlier, parents were much less concerned with this type of general information than with information about their child but, if 31% of parents who left school at 16 – and 37% of DE parents – think a lot of it is full of jargon, then this is disappointing. Interestingly, there was no such 'social' bias when thinking about child-specific information. It is also notable that *Parents + Schools* readers are no happier with the jargon than non-readers, despite the 'jargon buster' on the back page.

5.3 How often receive written communication from school

Over half (56%) of parents reported receiving written communication from the school at least once a week, usually via 'pupil post'(letters being given to pupils to take home). This includes around one in ten (14%) who claimed to get information every day or most days. However, at the other extreme, 12% of parents received information less often than once a month or 'never'. This surprisingly varied response probably reflects schools' different approaches to communication. Even some (10%) of the 'very involved' parents reported receiving information less often than once a month.

There is, however, a large difference between primary school and secondary school. Primary school communication to parents seems to be more intensive, with two thirds (69%) of parents claiming to receive something at least once a week, compared to only four in ten (39%) secondary school parents.

Chart 5.1 Regularity of written communication



Base: All (2019), child at primary school (1158), secondary school (861)

Only 1% of the native English speakers said they had never received any written communication. The corresponding figure for parents who don't speak English as their first language was 6%. This difference is statistically significant. Perhaps children are less likely to pass written communication to their parents if English is not their first language. While all survey respondents could speak adequate English, not all of them may read it. Furthermore, the International Adult Literacy Survey (carried out in Great Britain in 1997) found that just over one in five (23%) adults aged between 16 and 65 had only basic

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literacy skills at best[7]. This may impact upon some of the frequency figures above if the child or other parent is aware of this.

5.4 Quality of written information

Three quarters (73%) of respondents reported that the written communication is "very easy" to understand, and only 2% claimed to find written communication difficult. There was nothing to suggest that parents who don't speak English as their first language found it more difficult to understand the written communication from school, even if they reported receiving it less often.

One in two (49%) parents said they thought the written communication from school was "very useful" and a further 45% thought it "fairly useful". Only a very small minority (6%) said they did not find the information useful. This is a slightly more positive take on school information than came from the attitude statements discussed above.

Table 5.2 School's written communication: usefulness and ease of comprehension

	How useful	How easy to understand
Very...	49%	73%
Fairly....	45%	25%
Not very...	5%	1%
Not at all...	1%	0.5%>
Base: all who receive written communication (1986)		

There were some differences in opinion between sub-groups. For instance, primary school parents were more positive than secondary school parents (53% 'very useful', compared to 42%). However, this may reflect the greater frequency of communication from primary schools rather than being a clear indication of a quality difference. Mums were also more positive than dads but, again, they were more involved than dads and this may have influenced their response.

5.5 Ways in which written communication could be improved

All parents who said they found the written communication difficult were asked in which way the information could be improved. The most common complaint was the use of jargon. For example, one respondent said, *"put it in simple, plain English rather than long big*

[7] The classification used in IALS is not a precise match with the classifications used by the Basic Skills Agency. However, the report authors suggest that 'the tasks at BSA Foundation (or Entry) level and some of the tasks at BSA Level 1 for reading fall within the IALS Level 1' (Carey, Low and Hansbro, 1997). The figure quoted in this text is for 'prose literacy' level 1.

words." A small number of parents mentioned their own ability to read was a problem *"I'm dyslexic. I cannot read very well. My daughter usually helps me read."* There were also a few respondents who felt that the school was not telling the whole story: *"(...) they don't want to tell me everything"*. Finally a couple of respondents raised issues about the physical presentation of the information, such as the poor quality of the photocopies and illegible handwriting. *"The hand-writing is terrible. It would be better if it was printed on a computer."*

5.6 External information sources

The interviewer presented parents with a list of key DfES information sources and asked, firstly, which they were aware of, and, secondly, which they had looked at. The sources were:

- Learning Journey Guide
- *Parents + Schools* magazine
- Discover Guides
- DfES parents websites

Around one in two parents were aware of at least one of the sources but no more than one in four was aware of any one specific source. Nearly a quarter (23%) were aware of the Learning Journey Guides, around one fifth (21%) were aware of *Parents + Schools* magazine, about one sixth (16%) were aware of the Discover guides and a further 14% were aware of the DfES parents websites. Primary school parents were slightly more aware of *Parents + Schools* magazine than secondary school parents (23% and 18% respectively) but were no more aware of the other sources. However, it was noticeable that those parents who spent longer in education or were from higher social groups were significantly more likely than average to be aware of these sources. *Parents + Schools* is the exception: awareness cuts across such social boundaries. This is not surprising as it is targeted at C2DE parents.

Not everyone aware of these information sources had actually looked at them. In total, only one in four (25%) parents had looked at any of these information sources – half the number who claimed awareness. It was particularly noticeable that only 10% had looked at a Learning Journey Guide when 23% were aware of it. Just over one in ten (12%) said they had looked at *Parents + Schools* magazine, slightly fewer (7%) had looked at a Discover guide and 8% of all parents with home internet access had looked at the DfES parents websites[8].

8 Awareness and use of the DfES website may be slightly under-reported because of the name change from DfEE.

The great majority of parents who had looked through a copy of *Parents + Schools* magazine (56%), Discover guides (53%) or the Learning Journey booklets (69%) received it from the child's school. Parents also mentioned shops, the library and family and friends but by no more than 15% in each case.

Table 5.3 Awareness and experience of DfES information sources		
	% aware of source	% looked at source
The Learning Journey	23%	10%
Parents + Schools	21%	12%
Discover guides	16%	7%
DfES Parents websites	14%	6%
		Base: all (2019)

5.7 Whether found DfES sources useful

The interviewer then asked parents who had looked at an information sources how useful they found it. The vast majority (80-90%) found each one useful but there were notable differences in *how* useful. Only one in five (19%) said they found *Parents + Schools* magazine 'very useful', but one third of respondents who had seen the Discover guides (33%) or Learning Journey Booklets (29%) said they found them very useful.

Table 5.4 Usefulness of DfES sources		
	% who found it very useful	% who found it very/fairly useful
Discover guides	33%	89%
The Learning Journey	29%	85%
Parents + Schools	19%	80%
Base: all looked at Discover guides (143), Learning Journey (210), P+S (271)		

5.8 Whether done anything different as a result of advice in DfES source

The interviewer asked parents who had looked at one or more information sources whether they had done anything different as a result of the information. Overall, 15% said they had done something different. This may not sound like a very impressive result but, firstly, trying to achieve behavioural change is an ambitious task and, secondly, parents may not recognise the influence of a source even if their behaviour *does* change. The fact that 85% said they had not changed anything in their behaviour does not necessarily mean that they are not thinking about changing or that they did not find the information or advice useful.

The interviewer then asked parents who *had* done something different what they had done. The response was quite varied but the main changes were (a) spending more time helping

with homework, and (b) a change in the *way* they help their children. Here are some of the things they said:

> *"[Changed] the way I approach their homework, especially reading. I used to sit them down and tell them to do it [and] only to come to me when they had a problem. Now we sit down together."*

> *"Spending smaller amounts of time doing numbers. Doing it more to her attention span rather that trying to get it through it no matter what."*

Parents also mentioned trying to better encourage or motivate their child, doing more extra-curricular activities with their child, seeking out more specific information from school, an increased confidence when dealing with school, and looking out for relevant books or TV programmes.

5.9 How to get parents more involved

All parents were asked the following question:

> *"Taking everything into account, what do you think could be done to get parents more involved in their children's school life?"*

However, around one third of parents (30%) said they did not know. The large number of parents saying this probably reflects the open nature of this question rather than a lack of ideas. Some respondents need more time to reflect and find it hard to come up with an answer off the top of their head. Also, around 6% said they were already involved enough.

The parents who did give an answer can be roughly divided into three groups:

1) Parents who want to be **pushed** (21% of all parents). These parents wanted schools to invite them and to place greater emphasis on the importance of parental involvement in schools. They believed parents should take greater responsibility but that they needed coercing. Some of them also expressed a wish for parental education/training or workshops.

> *"Teachers should ... invite parents into the school and make the atmosphere more inviting for parents to help. There should be more communication."*

> *"Having courses at the school - classes for parents to teach them how to help children at home."*

> *"Educate parents as to the importance of being involved in their child's education"*

> *"I think parents should be made to get involved with children's school life because a lot [of parents] don't care. They should be made to sign things. Maybe kids are not giving parents information because they don't want them to get involved."*

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"They don't push you to go up to the school unless you are part a group. I think there should be more open days/evenings."

2) Parents who want the relationship - particularly the communication - between the school and parents to be more **convenient** (32% of all parents). They want more information, meetings, and activities in the evenings and weekend so they can participate. They are also want more informal meetings with teachers and would like schools to be more welcoming. The common denominator is that they "want more" and the active role is to be taken by the school to "provide more" and to facilitate parental involvement. Some verbatim comments are listed below.

"Send more letters. Give us more information about what's going on in school."

"Making teachers more approachable. More parents' evenings midway through the school term so if there is a problem with the child it can be rectified sooner rather than being known at the end of the year."

"Making it easier for access into the school. The hours where teachers are available are not conducive for working parents. Would like more after hours access."

"More flexibility for parents to come into the school on a less informal basis to have whatever discussions they may require."

"I'd like to be able to go into the school if I have a real problem and see someone immediately and not have to make an appointment."

Perhaps these two kinds of comment are two sides of the same coin. The responsibility for initiating action in both cases rests with the school. Parents who said they want more convenience and more communication are putting the emphasis on the school providing "easy access" to information and communication. Parents who said they want to be "pushed" are stressing the school's active role and the parents' passive status. Some parents may feel powerless without the school initiating improvements.

3) Five per cent expressed a wish for changes of a more structural nature such as more childcare, money, being able to give up work etc.

"Social and professional life in this country does not permit this to happen but organisations should allow parents time off to visit schools during the day."

Finally, one per cent (17 parents) made suggestions of a more specific practical nature. Almost all of these involved new technology, especially schools making greater use of e-mail and websites to communicate with parents.

"[Parents could get] involved through websites, more parent-teacher discussion; not enough of that [at the moment]. More information online, monthly reports. [Parents could have their] own separate passwords to access information on the net."

There were also suggestions about organising a starter pack for parents:

"Packages put together with bits on help-lines, websites etc. A booklet, even, to show resources."

Generally speaking parents want to be more involved but work, family life, lack of transport and childcare are all restrictions on increasing the level of involvement. Parents want more information from the school and they would also like more (informal) contact with teachers. They would like school to initiate more activities to establish a relationship between the school and the parents. These activities must be held at convenient times for working parents. Some parents also welcome the idea of new technology as a means of communication between them and the school.

5.10 Summary

Parents' evenings and written communication via pupil post are still the most common ways for parents to find out about their child's progress at school. Test results also play a part, especially with older children, and nine in ten parents ask their child. Just over half claimed to have had meetings with teachers outside of the standard parents' evening structure and a lot of primary school parents cited informal meetings in the playground and so on. This was less common among secondary school parents.

Parents seem largely happy with the quality of written communication coming from schools, although a significant minority felt the general – as opposed to child-specific – information was spoilt by jargon. Parents who had left school at 16 were most likely to feel this way.

Around one in two parents were aware of at least one DfES-produced source but only half of these had actually looked at one. Parents were most likely to have looked through *Parents + Schools* (12%), the only source with a balance 'user profile'. All the other sources had upmarket user profiles. However, while *Parents + Schools* is generally well received, only one in five readers found it 'very useful'.

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6 Literature review

The objective of this review of literature is to provide a context for the interpretation of the findings of the study. The review has examined published material on Government initiative to increase parental involvement in schools over the past 5 years.

The review found that although there was a fairly large number of publications on the subject, a great deal of them were in the form of expressions of opinion from non-academic studies. Few rigorous academic studies were identified which looked into the issue, either in the United Kingdom or in other countries.

6.1 Method

Preliminary searches were made using the Internet and leads were followed up in every case. Once this method was exhausted, University departments were contacted, as were all relevant academic, commercial, government and quasi-government bodies, as well as research associations. In addition, On-line searches were carried out of all newspaper articles over the past five years.

6.2 General studies on parental involvement in education

A number of studies have indicated that the majority of parents are orientated to their child's academic progress, but there are others who do not become involved. In an interview with the Guardian, Dr Cowan of the Institute of Education commented about the Government's recent efforts to encourage parents to become more involved in their child's education. He felt that the Government has made a number of efforts to help provide parents with the skills required to play such a part, but there was a long way to go before this could be achieved. He also felt that schools are tending to tell parents what to do rather than engaging them as equal partners in the education progress (Freely, 2000).

These comments appear to summarise many views expressed by writers in the field. Crozier (1998) commented that many parents do not feel involved, quoting a working class father .. " The state has planned the school education ... I'm not involved at all". Crozier thus highlights the social class differences in involvement highlighted by other writers. Vincent et al (2000) also commented that social class has a direct impact on involvement, and continued to say that schools may also tend to marginalise some parents by creating circumstances in which parents from lower social classes do not feel able to participate. In some ways, schools reflect parental attitudes to participation in school.

In an interview with the Times Education Supplement, Fran Stevens, a parent and chair of governors at a junior school, (1998) talks about a 'glass doorway' to schools through which parents feel they are unable to pass. She points out that after many years of separation

between home and school, many parents do not value their role in their child's education. Schools, she thinks, should take the initiative and "the door should be open from day one": the initial contact that parents have with the local school sets the tone for all future encounters. While this view is often repeated in the press (Baker, 2001; Fox, 2000), there are no rigorous studies which explore the extent to which this view is held among parents, or what could be done to draw them into their child's education.

Writers have also commented that it is often the positive attitudes of parents and teachers which drive parental involvement. In a study of two open schools (i.e. schools which have opened up through increased parental involvement) , Stanley and Wyness (1999) suggest that teachers have inside knowledge of not only the child but also of the parent, and that parents involve themselves not in term of parental rights, but to be good, responsible parents. In this way, parental empowerment in itself is "something of a myth", and the real responsibility lies with teachers in drawing parents into the process. Hallgarten (2000) concurs, saying that resources are skewed away from parental involvement, and suggests that this should move up the scale of educational priorities. The Campaign for State Education (CASE)[9] takes this a step further, wanting to see a clear, nationally elected parental voice at all levels, from school-level to national-level, which gets involved in educational policy making. CASE also argues for parental involvement activities that deliberately target fathers, grandparents and childminders.

Education Action Zones[10] have as one of their key policies 'parents as partners'. In Wednesbury EAZ, parents' opinions were researched on their own perceptions of how involved they feel in their children's education, how easy they found it to get involved and whether they would like to be more involved. A major finding was a lack of clarity and direction from schools on what they want from parents. Parents felt that there was a 'them and us' situation with teachers seen as educators and parents as enforcers. Parents felt that if they were going to become partners with schools, they needed clearer guidance and information, and suggested a parents' network for all schools in the EAZ (Hallgarten, 2000).

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9 CASE is an education campaign group, which aims to campaign for the right of all to the highest quality state education, regardless of race, gender, home circumstances, ability or disability. http://www.casenet.org.uk/

10 Education Action Zones (EAZs), established by DfES, are made up of a number of local schools, the local education authority, voluntary organisations, businesses and parents. They are funded by the Government and businesses and there are at present 99 zones. They address social and economic deprivation in relation to educational underachievement.

Gamarnikow and Green (1999), both from the Institute of Education, focus their discussion on Education Action Zones, particularly in addressing problems in relations between schools, parents and the community. They argue that EAZ families typically are seen as dysfunctional in relation to education and that EAZs wish to reform and reshape families and communities in order to make them feel part of the learning community rather than recognising the value of working class-life.

There have been a number of studies in the United States of America which have investigated attitudes towards parental involvement in schools.

In 1998 The US Department of Education sponsored " Family Involvement in Education: A National Portrait" in which 376 parents completed a telephone interview.

While nine in ten parents reported at least two different opportunities to be involved in their child's school, two fifths had never been invited to observe classes while in session. Parents felt that their child's school did "very well" in explaining how the children were meant to behave. However, fewer than half thought the school explained what the children should be able to achieve. The majority had had some input concerning discipline and safety procedures, but few said they had input into other school policies.

The issue of input into school policies was investigate in a study by Public Agenda Online (1999). This study of parents found that less than two fifths had been involved or would feel comfortable being involved in decision making in schools The study, which also included a survey of teachers, found that there were real differences in the perceptions of parents and teachers:

- Parents thought teachers were accessible and caring; teachers thought parental involvement overall was fair or poor, although parents agree that most parents need to be more involved.
- Most parents felt they were not comfortable about making management decisions about their children's schools; few teachers approved of parents taking on this role.
- Parents said they would be comfortable acting as mentors for school activities and most said they volunteered from time to time. Volunteering at school was not a top priority for parents or teachers.
- Parents said they wanted to be more involved in their children's education. Most said it was natural for parents to be less involved at high school.
- Homework was an area of contention: teachers felt unsupported; parents felt obligated and harassed.

A further study by the National Center for Education Statistics (1996) found that schools and parents had distinctly different views on what could be done to help parents become

more involved, and these were exaggerated in some circumstances. In small and rural schools, parents and schools for the most part agreed on topics such as help with homework, levels of information provided to parents and including parents in decision-making. In larger and in urban schools, and those with high minority enrolment, the majority of parents thought they were not well informed about school decisions or about events, although they attended such events when they knew about them. The schools felt that they kept parents well informed about events, homework and child development and that parents were encouraged to be included in school decision-making but that parents did not attend events at school.

There have been some initiatives which have succeeded in increasing parental involvement. In Alaska Parent Co-ordinators are paid to communicate with parents, and this has had the effect of reducing the number of parental complaints to schools. In addition, parents appeared to be very positive about their role in their child's education – over nine in ten felt it is extremely important to be involved in their child's education, and just over a half thought that low levels of parental involvement were a problem.

Turning to views of government involvement in the area, a survey of parents in the US in 1998 found that parents supported federal funding for a wide variety of education initiatives, including funding designed to increase parental involvement in their children's schools. In fact, parents rate federal funding for parental involvement programs even higher in importance than funding to hire more teachers or build new schools.

6.3 Summary

Few studies in the UK have investigated issues relating to increasing parental involvement in education. Those which discuss the issue centre around the parent-teacher relationship and the responsibility of both parties in increasing involvement. Some parents feel unable to become involved because of their perceived attitude of schools, and it is clear from the literature that parents from lower social classes are least likely to feel involved.

In the USA, both voluntary and government organisations are expending time and money on improving parental involvement in schools. However, surveys have shown that this is seen as more successful in some schools than others. As in the UK, parental social class has a bearing on how popular the programmes are and how successfully they have been implemented.

6.4 References

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Technical appendix

Sampling methods

BMRB used an EPSEM method of sampling, with numbers provided by the specialist agency SSI. EPSEM stands for 'equal probability of selection method'. In this context, that means that every land-line telephone number in England had an equal chance of selection for the sample. SSI generated the sample in two stages: 1) a random selection of telephone exchanges, and 2) a random selection of telephone numbers within each selected exchange.

As a result, no adjustments need to be made to the data to account for different probabilities of telephone number selection .

A screening question was used to establish household eligibility - presence of any children aged 5-16 attending state school – and the computer programme made a random selection from among those parents (or guardians) eligible for interview . Interviewers called back a minimum of ten times in order to complete an interview once a respondent had been selected. A 'refusals' survey was also conducted, in which senior interviewers followed up 'soft' refusals and tried to convert these into interviews. In total, interviews were achieved in 56% of all identified eligible households, although the proportion of households identified as eligible (18%) was below the predicted incidence of approximately 22-25% The precise outcomes from each sample record are shown below.

Table A1: Fieldwork outcomes		
Total issued sample	**56,498**	**100%**
No final outcome achieved	9,318	16% of issues
Final outcome achieved	**47,180**	**84% of issues**
'Deadwood'	24,398	52% of final outcomes
• Number unobtainable	9,576	20% of final outcomes
• Fax/computer line	1997	4% of final outcomes
• Business number	12,643	27% of final outcomes
• Hearing/language problem	293	1% of final outcomes
Contact with household	22,782	48% of final outcomes
Refusal before eligibility established	2,801	12% of contacts
Ineligible household	16,365	72% of contacts
Eligible for interview	**3,616**	**16% of contacts and 18% of households where eligibility established**
All refusals after eligibility established	1,563	43% of eligible households
• Refusal before selection of respondent or refusal by non-selected contact	1,159	32% of eligible households
• Selected respondent refuses	404	11% of eligible households
Selected respondent unavailable during fieldwork	34	1% of eligible households
Interviews	**2,019**	**56% of eligible households**

One of the outcomes from using EPSEM sample is the large number of records that end up classified as 'deadwood' (impossible to achieve any kind of interview). The recent proliferation of direct lines within businesses is largely responsible. These numbers are not listed on commercially available databases and are not screened out by SSI before delivering the sample. Most of the other 'deadwood' records are non-working numbers. SSI use an automated screening process to remove them before sample delivery but this automated process does not recognise all forms of unobtainable numbers.

Non-response bias

Although both the selection of telephone numbers and respondents was intrinsically random, there is still some non-response bias in the final sample. The likelihood that a selected respondent will refuse to take part is not even across all demographic groups. It is therefore important to compare the demographic profile of the final sample with data derived from the census and updated by major random face-to-face surveys with high response rates. BMRB conduct many such surveys and have used their own composite source to provide the necessary incidence data.

BMRB expected that dads in two parent families would be under-represented in the final sample. Men are traditionally more likely to refuse to take part in market research, and this is especially true if they feel that their partner could better answer the questions. The table below compares the achieved sample with an estimate of actual household incidence in England.

Table A2: Non-response bias		
	Achieved	**Actual**
Households with two parent families	72%	75%
• Respondent should be male	27%	37.5%
• Respondent should be female	45%	37.5%
Households with single parent families	28%	25%
• Headed by men	3%	3%
• Headed by women	25%	22%
Base: all households containing children aged 5-16 (approx. 25% of all households)		

The achieved sample is accurate in its ratio between two-parent and single-parent households, and within single-parent households, the ratio between those headed by a man and those headed by a woman. However, nearly two thirds of respondents in two-parent households were women, indicating a major non-response bias. This ratio has been corrected in the final weighted data set presented here . There were no other significant non-response biases.

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Fieldwork

BMRB carried out fieldwork between 21st November and 19th December 2001 using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). 2019 interviews with achieved with parents/guardians of children aged 5-16 in England. The average interview length was 21 minutes.

Sample Profile

The table below shows the profile of the sample interviewed. Further details on the sample are shown in section 2 (Sample Demographics).

Table A3 Sample Profile		
Category	**Description**	**% of all parents interviewed**
Parent's characteristics		
Gender of parent	Dad	41%
	Mum	59%
Marital status	Single	25%
	Married/living with partner	75%
Working status	Full time employment	49%
	Not in full time employment	51%
Parent's terminal education age	16 or younger	54%
	17-18	23%
	19 +	23%
Parent's ethnic origin	White British	86%
	White Irish	1%
	Black Caribbean	1%
	Black African	<0.5%
	Indian	2%
	Pakistani	1%
	Bangladeshi	<0.5%
	Chinese	<0.5%
	White/black Caribbean	<0.5%
	White/black African	<0.5%
	White/Asian	<0.5%
	Other	5%
	Not stated/don't know	<0.5%
Parent's first language is English	Yes	95%
	No	5%
Characteristics of selected child		
Gender of selected child	Boy	51%
	Girl	49%
School year of selected child	Years 1-2	22%
	Years 3-6	35%
	Years 7-9	24%
	Years 10-11	18%
	All in primary school	66%
	All in secondary school	34%
Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Child does not have SEN	88%
	Child has SEN	12%
	Child has statement of SEN	5%

Table A3 Sample Profile		
Category	**Description**	**% of all parents interviewed**
Household characteristics		
Household social grade	AB	28%
	C1	27%
	C2	22%
	DE	23%
Presence of children in household	One child aged 5-16	47%
	Two children aged 5-16	40%
	Three or more aged 5-16	13%
	Any children aged 0-4	27%
	Any children aged 17+	16%

QUESTIONNAIRE: FINAL VERSION

(19th November 2001)

Good afternoon / evening. My name is …. from the British Market Research Bureau who are conducting a survey on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills. The survey is about parents and education.

IF FIRST CONTACT:

Can I just check, are there any children aged between 5 and 16 *who attend state school* currently living in this household?

IF NO: That's fine. Thank you for your time. Sorry to bother you

IF YES, CONTINUE.

Can you tell me how many parents or guardians (of any child between the ages of 5 and 16) are currently living in this household?

Numeric answer (record as part of survey data)

IF MORE THAN ONE, RANDOMLY SELECT RESPONDENT AND ASK TO SPEAK TO HIM/HER:
IF ONLY ONE PARENT/GUARDIAN:
Is that you?

Record name (needs to go on file so that all subsequent calls ask for <name>)

IF NOT FIRST CONTACT: Can I speak to <name>?

WHEN SPEAKING TO NAME, CONTINUE:

SECTION A: HOME SITUATION

Q1. How many children aged between 5 and 16 *attending state school* live in this household? Please don't include any children in reception classes.

Numeric answer

IF 0 – CLOSE INTERVIEW

Q2. [IF MORE THAN ONE CHILD ATTENDING STATE SCHOOL: Thinking only about your children at state school, how old are those aged between 5 and 16? [IF ONLY ONE CHILD ATTENDING STATE SCHOOL:] How old is your child?

INTERVIEWER: record ages of all relevant children.

Numeric answers between 5 and 16

Q3. RANDOMLY SELECT AGE. If more than one child of that age, choose child whose first name comes first alphabetically.

Record name and use as text variable throughout questionnaire (interviewer will reassure respondent that name is taken only to make the rest of the questionnaire easier to administer)

Q4. What School Year is <name> in?
Note: CHILDREN IN RECEPTION CLASSES ARE NOT ELIGIBLE

Record Year
DK

IF CHILD AGED 11-12 AND DK SCHOOL YEAR:

Q5. Is <name> at primary or secondary school?

Secondary
Primary
(note: SEN status to be collected at end of questionnaire)

Q6. Also record child's sex (should be clear)

Male
Female

Q7. Record respondent's sex (should be clear)

Male
Female

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SECTION B: ATTITUDES TOWARDS EDUCATION

Q8. First of all, I am going to read out a series of statements about parents and education. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each one.

READ OUT AND RANDOMISE ORDER OF PRESENTATION

Definitely agree
Tend to agree
Tend to disagree
Definitely disagree

- If I talk too often to teachers at my child's school, I will be labelled a trouble maker
- A lot of information given by the school about child's education is full of jargon
- I find child's school welcoming to parents
- My child's school gives me clear information on how my child is getting on
- My child's school makes it easy for me to be involved in my child's education
- I know all I need to about how I can help with my child's education
- I would like to be more involved in my child's school life.

Q9. I am now going to read out a list of responsibilities some parents have told us about. For each one, please could you tell me how important it is using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means it is not at all important and 5 means it is extremely important.

READ OUT RANDOMISE ORDER OF PRESENTATION

1 Not at all important
2
3
4
5 Extremely important
DK

Making sure child attends school regularly and on time
Helping child with homework
Attending parents evenings and other parent-teacher contact

Q10. Sometimes parents take their child out of school during term time, for example, to go on a family holiday. Would you be happy to do this yourself?

Yes
No
(DO NOT READ OUT) Depends on circumstances
DK

Q11. Thinking in general about children and education, would you say that a child's education is …
READ OUT
REVERSE ANSWER LIST FOR EVERY SECOND INTERVIEW

Wholly the parent's responsibility
Mainly the parent's responsibility
Mainly the school's responsibility
Wholly the school's responsibility
(DO NOT READ OUT) Both equally
(DO NOT READ OUT) DK

SECTION C: LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT

Q12. How involved do you personally feel in <name>'s school life?

Very involved
Fairly involved
Not very involved
Not at all involved
DK

IF MORE THAN ONE PARENT OR GUARDIAN:

Q13. Who is more involved in <child>'s school life? Would you say …
READ OUT

You are
The other parent is
(DO NOT READ OUT) Both equally
Don't know

ASK ALL:

Q14. Thinking of your involvement with <name>'s school, which of the following activities do you do?

CODE EACH AS:
Whenever there is an opportunity
Sometimes
Never
Don't know

Go to Parents' Evenings
Help out in class
Help out elsewhere in school for example help with the library, dinner duties, school trips and so on
Help with fund-raising activities
Help with special interest groups like sports or drama clubs
Get involved with Parents and Teacher Associations

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Q15. Do you know any of the Parent Governors at <name>'s school?

IF YES THEN PROBE ARE YOU A PARENT GOVERNOR OR DO YOU KNOW WHO IT IS

Yes – I am a Parent Governor
Yes – I know who it is
DK

IF AGREE WOULD LIKE TO BE MORE INVOLVED WITH CHILD'S SCHOOL LIFE AT Q8:

Q16. You said earlier that you would like to be more involved in <child>'s school life. In what way? PROBE How else would you like to be more involved in <name>'s school life?

Open-ended

ASK ALL:

Q17. Is there anything that stops you getting more involved with <name>'s school life? DO NOT PROMPT

IF SAYS 'LACK OF TIME', CODE IT BUT EXPLICITLY ASK 'WHAT ELSE, APART FROM LACK OF TIME?'PROBE: IN WHAT WAY?

Work commitments
Specific mention of shift work
Not sure what the school wants me to do
Child does not want me to
Child does not tell me what is happening at school
Demands/needs of other children/Childcare difficulties
Partner/other parent or guardian takes the responsibility
Lack of time
No specific barriers
Other(specify)

SECTION D: COMMUNICATION WITH SCHOOL

Next I would like you to think about communication with <child>'s school.

Q18. I am now going to read out some things other parents have told us they talk about with their children's teachers. Can you tell me how often you talk about them with <name>'s teachers? FOR EACH: Do you talk about ....regularly, occasionally, only once or twice in the past twelve months, or never (CODE APPROPRIATE ANSWER).

How your child is doing in class
Your child's behaviour at school
Your child's involvement in sport or other extra-curricular activities
Your child's relationship with other children, perhaps bullying or other issues
Other (specify)
Don't know

IF TALK WITH TEACHERS AT ALL:

Q19. We find that some parents are more confident than others when talking with teachers. How confident do you personally feel when talking to teachers at <name>'s school?

Very confident
Fairly confident
Not very confident
Not at all confident
(do not read out) Depends on teacher
(do not read out) Depends on subject

Q20. In which of these ways do you find out about how <name> is getting on at school?

READ OUT, NOT RANDOMISED

Parents' evenings
Other special meetings for parents such as meetings to talk about a Home School Agreement
Meetings with teachers specifically about your child
Talk to teachers informally, such as in the playground
School reports
Test results
Notes or letters from school that child brings home or other written communication
My child tells me or I ask my child
My partner tells me
Other parents tell me
In some other way (specify)
None of these
DK

IF MORE THAN ONE MENTIONED ABOVE:

Q21. Which is the most useful way for you to find out about how <name> is getting on at school?
FILTER FROM Q20
READ OUT IF NECESSARY; CODE ONE ONLY

Parents' evenings
Other special meetings for parents such as meetings to talk about a Home School Agreement
Meetings with teachers specifically about your child
Talk to teachers informally, such as in the playground
School reports
Test results
Notes or letters from school that child brings home or other written communication
My child tells me or I ask my child
My partner tells me
Other parents tell me
In some other way (specify)
None of these
DK

Q22. Can I just check, how often do you receive any written communication from <name>'s school? CODE BEST ANSWER

Every day
Most days
At least once a week
At least once a month
Less often than once a month
Never
Don't know
(do not read out) Depends what it is

IF EVER RECEIVE WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

Q23. In general, how useful do you find this information from school?

Very useful
Fairly useful
Not very useful
Not at all useful
Don't know

Q24. And how easy do you find it to understand this written information from school?

Very easy
Fairly easy
Fairly difficult
Very difficult
Don't know

IF DIFFICULT:

Q25. In what way do you find this information difficult to understand? PROBE: What could be done to make it clearer?

Open-ended

Q26. Now thinking about homework, how often does <name> get homework?

NOTE: IF PARENT SAYS EVEY DAY DURING THE WEEK CODE EVERY DAY

Every day
Most days
At least once a week
At least once a month
Less often than once a month
Never
Don't know

UNLESS NEVER AT Q.26:

Q27. How often do you help <name> with their homework, if at all?

Every time
Most times
Occasionally
Never
Don't know
(do not read out) Depends what it is
(DO NOT READ OUT) When the child asks for help

Q28. How confident do you (if 'never': would you) feel helping <name> with their homework? READ OUT AND CODE MOST APPROPRIATE ANSWER

Always confident
Confident most of the time
Confident some of the time
Never confident
Don't know
(DO NOT READ OUT) Depends what it is

IF DEPENDS WHAT IT IS ASK Q29:

Q29. Which subjects do you feel less confident helping <name> with?

Open-ended

IF SOME OF THE TIME/NEVER CONFIDENT:

Q30. You said you are not always confident helping <name> with their homework. Can you tell me why that is?

DO NOT PROMPT

Different teaching methods these days
Don't understand the work my child does
Wasn't taught certain subjects at school
I might confuse my child / do it wrong
Other (specify)
Don't know

Q31. Are you involved in any other way with <name>'s school life that we haven't already mentioned?

Yes (specify)
No

SECTION E: AWARENESS OF TERMS

Q32. I am now going to read out a number of terms used about schools and education. For each one, could you tell me if you have heard of the term and how much you know about it. INTERVIEWER: record what respondent thinks of their knowledge level, even if you think you know he/she is wrong!

Heard of the term and know *a lot* about what it means
Heard of the term and know *a little* about what it means
Heard of the term but don't know what it means
Never heard of the term

LIST RANDOMISED APART FROM FIRST TERM WHICH ALWAYS COMES FIRST.

- Home School Agreement
- School performance tables
- Key stages
- National Curriculum levels or SATs
- National Curriculum
- DfES
- Ofsted
- Baseline assessment (filter: primary only)
- Literacy Hour (filter: primary only)
- Daily Maths Lesson (filter: primary only)
- Dummy term(s) : Science for Life

IF CLAIMS KNOW WHAT HOME SCHOOL AGREEMENT MEANS ALWAYS FOLLOW UP WITH Q33, IF CLAIMS NOT TO KNOW WHAT HOME SCHOOL AGREEMENT IS, FOLLOW UP WITH THE FIRST TERM ON THE LIST THAT RESPONDENT CLAIMS TO KNOW ABOUT (LIST RANDOMISED).

Q33. Can you tell me a little bit about <term>? PROBE: What do you understand it to mean?

Open-ended answers

Q34. I am now going to read out a list of things that may affect <name>'s school life. How much do you feel you know about each one?

A lot
A little
Nothing at all
(do not read out) Do not need to know about it/not applicable

- How to switch schools
- Helping your child choose their exam options (filter: secondary only, age 12-16)
- What to do if your child doesn't get the secondary school place you wanted (filter: parent of child aged 10+ only)
- What to do if your child is affected by bullying (that is if your child is being bullied or is bullying other children)
- What to do if you think your child has a learning difficulty

SECTION F: AWARENESS / USE OF MAGAZINES/WEBSITE ETC

Q35. Now I am going to read out a list of information sources. For each one, can you tell me if you have heard about it before today.
PROBE: Have you heard of any other sources of information?

'Parents + schools' magazine
'Discover' guides – e.g. about Roman Britain or Electricity
Learning Journey guides (The Parent's Guide to the Curriculum)
DfES Parents websites
Any other websites about children's education
Other (specify)

IF HEARD OF PARENTS PLUS SCHOOLS MAGAZINE, DISCOVER GUIDES, LEARNING JOURNEY GUIDES OR GOV'T WEBSITE:

Q36. And have you actually looked through a copy of 'Parents + schools'/ a Discover guide /Learning Journey Guide / looked at the DfES website?

Yes, 'Parents + schools' magazine
Yes, Discover guide
Yes, Learning Journey guides
Yes, DfES Parents websites
No

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FOR EACH ABOVE, ASK Q37,38 (EXCEPT WEBSITE)

Q37. Where did you see / get hold of these publications?

Child's school
Local library
Shop
Local post office
Telephone request line
Website order
Local GP/dentist's surgery
Other (specify)
DK

Q38. How useful did you find ....?

Very useful
Fairly useful
Not very useful
Not at all useful

IF LOOKED AT ANY INFORMATION SOURCES AT Q36

Q39. Have you done anything different as a result of the advice given in these magazines, guides or websites?

Yes
No
DK

IF YES

Q40. What have you done as a result of this advice?
PROBE WHAT ELSE

OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE

SECTION G: PREFERRED INFORMATION SOURCES

Q41. From which one source would you most like to get information about children and education?
READ OUT AND CODE ONE SOURCE ONLY
RANDOMISE LIST

Child's school
Local library
Shop
Local post office
Telephone request line
Website / internet
Local GP/dentist's surgery
Other (specify)

Q42. Taking everything into account, what do you think could be done to get parents more involved in their children's school life?

DO PROMPT BUT PROBE FULLY. RECORD ANSWERS VERBATIM.

More money for me
More teachers/More spending on education
Childcare/Crèche/Other help with childcare
For me to be able to give up work and spend more time with children
Other specify

SECTION H: CLASSIFICATION

Thank you. Now I need to ask you a few more questions about yourself so that we can classify your results.

Q43. What was your age last birthday?

Q44. Are you ... (READ OUT LIST)

Married/Living as married
Single/Engaged
Widowed
Separated
Divorced
Refused

Q45. At what age did you personally finish your full time education?

14 or under
15
16
17
18
19
20
21 - 23
24 or more
Still studying
Refused

Q46. Which of these best describes your employment at the moment? (READ OUT)

Working in a paid job (30+ hours)
Working in a paid job (8-29 hours)
Working in a paid job (less than 8 hours)
Self employed
Not in paid employment / looking after house or home
Full time student at school
Full time student at university / college
Unemployed
Retired from paid employment
Don't Know
Other
Other specify

Q47. ESTABLISH WHO IN HOUSEHOLD IS CHIEF INCOME EARNER TURN TO YOUR SHEETS AND CODE SOCIAL GRADE FOR THE CHIEF INCOME EARNER

A
B
C1
C2
D
E
Refused

Q48. Do you have access to the Internet at all?
INTERVIEWER: IF YES PROBE FOR WHERE ACCESS, HOME, WORK, SCHOOL/COLLEGE OR ELSEWHERE

Home access to internet
Access to internet at work
Access to internet at school/college
Access to internet elsewhere
No access to internet
Don't Know

Q49. Next, please choose one answer from this list to indicate your cultural background?

READ OUT

White
Black
Asian
Mixed ethnic group
Don't Know
Refused
Other
Other specify

IF WHITE

Q50. PROBE FOR SPECIFIC BACKGROUND: WHITE

White British
White Irish
Don't Know
Other
Other specify

IF BLACK

Q51. PROBE FOR SPECIFIC BACKGROUND: BLACK

Black Caribbean
Black African
Don't Know
Other
Other specify

IF ASIAN

Q52. PROBE FOR SPECIFIC BACKGROUND: ASIAN

Indian
Pakistani
Bangladeshi
Chinese
Don't Know
Other
Other specify

IF MIXED ETHNIC GROUP

Q53. PROBE FOR SPECIFIC BACKGROUND: MIXED

White / black Caribbean
White / black African
White / Asian
Don't Know
Other
Other specify

ASK ALL

Q54. And is English your first language?

Yes
No
Don't Know

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Q55. Finally, can I just check does <name> have special educational needs?

Yes
No
Don't Know
Refused

IF YES

Q56. Does <name> have a Statement of Special Educational Needs?

Yes
No
Don't Know
Refused

Q57. Does <name> go to a mainstream school or a special school for those with Special Educational Needs?

Mainstream school
Special school
Don't Know
Refused

Q58. Can I just check are there any other children in the household aged under five or over 16 living in the household?

Yes-under 5
Yes -over 16
No
DK

THANK AND CLOSE

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